



## Zika Information leaflet Team Ireland



### What is Zika virus disease (Zika)?

Zika is a disease caused by Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.

### What are the symptoms of Zika?

60-80% of people infected with the Zika virus are asymptomatic. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

### How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. This is a day time biting mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites.

It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. We do not know how often Zika is transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

Spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual contact have been reported.

### Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is found who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk for infection, including pregnant women.

### What can people do to prevent becoming infected with Zika?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to avoid being bitten. Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites. Here's how:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and a hat.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use insect repellents containing 25-50% DEET or 20% Picaridin.
  - Always follow the product label instructions.
  - Reapply insect repellent as directed.
  - Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
  - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
  - Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items.
  - Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last.

### What is the treatment for Zika?

There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat Zika virus infections.

Treat the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain.
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.

## **What should I do if I have Zika**

During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another person through mosquito bites. An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people. To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness.

See your healthcare provider if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes within 2 weeks after traveling to a country where Zika virus cases have been reported. Be sure to tell your health care provider where you traveled.

## **Is there a vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika?**

No. There is no vaccine to prevent infection or medicine to treat Zika.

## **Are you immune for life once infected?**

Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

## **Does Zika virus infection in pregnant women cause birth defects?**

Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called microcephaly, (a condition in which a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age) as well as other severe fetal brain defects.

CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:

- Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
  - Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
  - If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant:
  - Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
- Female staff should consider effective contraception to avoid pregnancy before, during and for at least 8 weeks after travel to an affected area. Advice on this can be sought from your GP or Family Planning Clinic.
- If a female partner is pregnant or considering pregnancy, their male partner who has travelled to an affected area should consider using condoms to avoid infecting their partner for 8 weeks in conjunction with effective contraception. If their male partner has clinical symptoms or laboratory proven Zika infection, this should be continued for 6 months.

Strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

As the Zika virus can be passed in a man's semen, men returning from a Zika-affected area who do not have any symptoms of Zika are advised to practice safe sex (by wearing a condom) for one month after return. Men who have developed symptoms that could be due to Zika virus infection (fever, headache, aches, pains, rash, itchy eyes) are advised to practice safe sex (by wearing a condom) for 6 months after return.

## **Does Zika virus infection cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?**

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder where a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes, paralysis. These symptoms can last a few weeks or several months. While most people fully recover from GBS, some people have permanent damage and in rare cases, people have died.

We do not know if Zika virus infection causes GBS. It is difficult to determine if any particular pathogen "caused" GBS. The Brazil Ministry of Health is reporting an increased number of people affected with GBS. CDC is working to determine if Zika and GBS are related.

This is precautionary advice that may be revised as more information becomes available.