

ZIKA FACT SHEET

Zika Virus: The Facts

What is the Zika virus?

The Zika virus is primarily spread to people who are bitten by infected *Aedes aegypti* and *albopictus* mosquitoes, which are also commonly known as yellow fever mosquitoes. The virus can spread anywhere the *Aedes* mosquitoes live.

In early 2016, the [World Health Organization](#) declared the Zika virus a global public health threat and serious concern for pregnant women or women who may become pregnant. The virus is active in 24 countries and thought to be responsible for a range of birth defects. The [Zika virus](#) can cause symptoms ranging from mild fever and joint pain to a skin rash or conjunctivitis.

Aedes mosquitoes that can carry the disease, if infected, are found primarily in the southern part of the United States, but have the potential to reach as far north as Connecticut and as far west as California. Initially, the virus was not expected to travel outside of the southern region of the U.S., but recent cases contracted abroad and the ability for the virus to spread from person to person, expands the impacted area. Locally transmitted cases have been reported in Florida. To view maps of the expected range of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/range.html>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shares more about the Zika virus, including how the virus is diagnosed and how it is treated. Learn more by visiting: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/about/index.html>.

What is an *Aedes aegypti* mosquito?

Aedes aegypti, the main culprit of the Zika outbreak, is also responsible for spreading [Dengue](#), [Chikungunya](#), and other viruses.

Aedes isn't your typical mosquito. Here are a few of its distinct characteristics and quick facts to help you spot these pests:

- *Aedes* lay eggs in containers with standing water found in bowls, cups, fountains, tires, vases, and even pools of water as tiny those collected in bottle caps.
- *Aedes* are typically found in or around your house. These mosquitoes are able to breed indoors where there is less variation of climate, which typically elongates their lifespan. The mosquitoes tend to gravitate towards the dark, humid places in your house under the sink, in closets, under furniture, or in the laundry room.
- *Aedes* prefer to live near people, meaning they actively look for ways to get inside your home and living spaces. They only fly a few blocks during their lifetime. Actively managing their local habitat in and around your home is very important.
- *Aedes* are daytime biters. While we often think of mosquitoes as being active at dawn and dusk, this pest bites all day long.

How can the Zika virus spread?

According to the CDC, there are four ways the Zika virus can be transmitted:

1. **Mosquito bites:** Zika-infected *Aedes aegypti* and *albopictus* mosquitoes transmit the virus to humans through bites.
2. **Mother to child:** Mothers who contract the Zika virus pass it on to their child.
3. **Sexual contact:** Zika virus can be spread between partners during intimacy since it can remain in semen longer than blood.
4. **Blood transfusion:** Because most people infected with the virus don't show any symptoms, blood donors may donate their blood to others without knowing they have been infected. To date, there are no confirmed blood transfusion transmission cases in the U.S; however, there have been multiple reported cases of blood transfusion transmission in Brazil.

If you are planning to travel to countries where the virus is active, please be mindful of how Zika can spread and contact your physician if you have any questions. To learn more about Zika transmission, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/index.html>.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of the Zika virus are fever, headache, rash, joint and muscle pain, and red eyes. Many people do not show symptoms, so those infected with the virus may not know they have it. There is now a [blood test](#) that can be administered by your doctor, and researchers are continuing to search for ways to detect the virus sooner.

To learn more about the Zika virus signs and symptoms, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/index.html>

Researchers continue to search for additional prevention methods, but there is currently no vaccine for Zika. **Preventing mosquito bites is currently the only way to prevent transmission of the virus.** For more information about the Zika vaccine development, visit: <http://bit.ly/25aBPDO>

Personal Mosquito Protection – Repellents

Zika Prevention = Doing your Part

Protect your family and your community from the mosquito bites that cause Zika virus by doing your part in and around your home. RISE recommends four easy steps to help control mosquitoes in your home, yard and community:

- **Put up personal barriers.** Wear light-colored clothing and cover up with long sleeves and pants and consider [repellent-treated clothing](#) treated with EPA-approved pesticides. Remember, while many mosquitoes are particularly active during dawn and dusk hours, *Aedes* mosquitoes that can transmit the Zika virus, bite all day long, and can bite up to 12 people during that time.
- **Reinforce your home or business.** Make sure the screens on your windows and doors are in good repair and close all windows and doors to remove any entry points for mosquitoes.
- **Apply mosquito-specific defenses.** Apply EPA-approved insect repellent on exposed skin, especially your legs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a

variety of safe and effective [repellents](#) for you and your family. Read the instructions on repellents before applying to your skin.

- **Eliminate standing water.** *Aedes* mosquitoes can breed in water trapped in containers as small as a bottle cap. Survey your home for possible areas of water collection – tire swings, buckets, bottles, clogged rain gutters, birdbaths, pet bowls, toys, flowerpot saucers, wading pools, and more. All of these water catchers attract mosquitoes and give them a place to breed.

Tips for safely applying personal, EPA-approved repellents

EPA-approved personal mosquito repellents will provide reliable protection and are safe for children and women who are or are planning to become pregnant when used according to label instructions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves the use of personal repellents and offers a [search tool](#) to help you choose the right product for your specific needs. These repellents work best when used properly, following the steps below:

- Read and follow all label instructions on repellents before applying them on yourself or your children's skin.
- Parents should apply repellents for young children. Apply the product to your hands and, using your treated hands, spread the repellent onto your child's skin.
- Avoid applying repellents directly over cuts, scratches, or irritated skin.
- Do not apply repellents to hands or near the eyes and mouth of young children to avoid ingestion.
- Apply repellents evenly using enough to cover exposed skin and/or clothing, and do not apply repellents under clothing.
- Always reapply the repellent according to the label instructions and do not over apply.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Wash treated clothing before wearing it again.

To learn more about EPA-approved repellents and when to use them, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents>.

Men's and Women's Health and Zika Virus

In light of recent news around the Zika virus, many women of childbearing age are uncertain of the precautions they should take to reduce their risk or their partner's of contracting the virus. A growing number of obstetricians and gynecologists are advising their patients to postpone travel to the countries where the Zika virus is currently active while pregnant or planning to become pregnant. The advice from medical professionals remains consistent — take steps to prevent mosquito bites whether you're traveling or staying in the comfort of your own home. If you return from a vacation and fear you might have been bitten by a Zika-infected mosquito, contact your doctor for more information.

Recent guidelines also recommend the following precautions for women [of childbearing age with possible Zika virus exposure](#). These suggestions are intended to help physicians and other health care

providers offer the most helpful information when treating and counseling patients concerned about Zika's impact on their family.

Below, please find a few key recommendations from American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:

- Women who present symptoms of the Zika virus should wait at least 8 weeks after symptoms appear, and men should wait 6 months before intimacy. The use of contraceptive methods to prevent unintended pregnancy is essential in areas of active Zika virus transmission.
- Men and women who visit areas where Aedes mosquitoes live, but are not showing symptoms of the Zika virus should also wait 8 weeks before intimacy with their partner.
- A potential donor is ineligible for donated reproductive tissue for 6 months following being diagnosed with, or having had a high probability of exposure to, the virus.
- Physicians should counsel and educate their patients on the Zika virus and update their informed consent.

For additional information and resources on the Zika virus and pregnancy, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/>, or check out the CDC's updated guidelines for women of reproductive age at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/qa-pregnant-women.html>.