

Zika Virus Disease

Community and Public Health

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Zika is a virus that is spread by mosquito bites although these mosquitoes are not normally found in New Zealand. However the virus can be transmitted sexually.

What are the symptoms?

The virus usually causes mild symptoms that last from 4 to 7 days.

Symptoms occur 4 to 12 days after exposure and can include:

- low-grade fever,
- pain and swelling especially in the small joints of the hands and feet,
- muscle pain,
- headache,
- red eyes and
- a rash.

Only one in five people who are infected have symptoms—so it's possible to have the infection and not know it.

What are the complications?

There are concerns that pregnant women infected with Zika can transmit the disease to their unborn babies, with potentially serious consequences including microcephaly and miscarriage.

There are also concerns that Zika sometimes leads to Guillain-Barré syndrome, a serious nerve disorder caused by the immune system.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment but rest and plenty of fluids help. Paracetamol can be used for pain and fever if needed.

Do not take aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen until a healthcare professional can rule out dengue, as there is a risk of bleeding.

Advice for women around Zika and pregnancy

Anyone who is pregnant or plans to become pregnant should therefore defer travel to Zika-affected areas. If travel is essential, delay pregnancy if possible.

Women who do travel to a Zika-affected area should protect themselves against mosquito bites (see the Ministry of Health website for further information) and use appropriate contraception to prevent pregnancy if needed.

Women returning from a Zika-affected area should avoid getting pregnant for eight weeks after leaving the affected country.

A woman has recently travelled to an area with Zika and is either pregnant or trying to become pregnant should speak with her healthcare provider or lead maternity carer, particularly if she develops any symptoms while travelling or within 4 weeks of returning from a Zika-affected area or country.



Advice for men

All men who have travelled to a Zika-affected area should avoid sex or use condoms for at least 8 weeks after departure—whether or not they have had symptoms of Zika virus disease.

If they have a partner who is pregnant, men should abstain from sexual activity (anal, oral or vaginal) or use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy.

If they have a partner who is at risk of becoming pregnant, men should abstain from sexual activity (anal, oral or vaginal) or use condoms for at least six months after returning from a Zika-affected area.

How is Zika prevented?

There is no vaccine for Zika virus.

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. **Everyone who is travelling to any Pacific Island nation or a Zika-affected area or country should protect themselves from mosquitoes.**

A list of Zika-affected countries is available on the CDC website (www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html).

Here are some ways to protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitoes:

- Use an insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535.
 - ◇ Insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, and IR3535 are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children older than 2 months when used according to the product label.
 - ◇ Oil of lemon eucalyptus products should not be used on children under 3 years of age.
- Apply sunscreen first, if using both sunscreen and an insect repellent.

- Insect repellent can be used to treat clothing, as directed.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) that has been treated with the insecticide permethrin.
- Use an insecticide spray to kill mosquitoes as directed.
- Use bed nets or a zip-up screen to protect your sleeping area.
- Stay in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.

How can I find out more?

Refer to the Ministry of Health website for more information: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/zika-virus

Contact Community and Public Health for more information:

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