

Zika Virus

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Zika virus (ZIKV) infection is spread by day-biting mosquitoes. A small number of cases of sexual transmission of ZIKV have also been reported. ZIKV is a flavivirus (similar to dengue) and was first discovered in a monkey in the Zika forest, Uganda in 1947. It is found in parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

All travellers to countries where ZIKV is known to occur are at risk of infection, although determining the actual level of risk is difficult. Travellers who spend a long period in areas where ZIKV is common are at increased risk. However, even short-term visitors may be exposed to the virus.

The majority of people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. For those with symptoms, ZIKV infection is usually a mild and short-lived illness; severe disease is uncommon. Symptoms may include a combination of the following: fever, headache, conjunctivitis (red, sore eyes), joint and muscle pain, a rash, itching and swollen joints. There is no specific treatment; rest, fluids and pain relief are recommended to help relieve symptoms. Serious complications and deaths from ZIKV are not common. However, ZIKV is a cause of Congenital Zika Syndrome ([microcephaly](#) and other congenital anomalies) and neurological complications such as [Guillain-Barré syndrome](#).

Prevention

Travellers should be aware of the risk of ZIKV in the destination to be visited. Information about ZIKV transmission in affected countries can be found in the 'Outbreaks' and 'Other risks' section of our [Country Information](#) pages.

There is no vaccine to prevent ZIKV infection. Prevention is by minimising mosquito bites; the mosquito that spreads ZIKV is most active in daylight hours. All travellers should be vigilant with insect bite precautions. See also [preventing infection by sexual transmission](#).

Those travelling to regions where ZIKV occurs should ideally seek travel health advice from their GP, practice nurse or a travel clinic at least 4-6 weeks before travel. This is particularly important for those who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, suffer from a severe, chronic medical condition, or have a medical condition that weakens the immune system.

For some countries where there is greater concern regarding the risk of exposure to ZIKV, pregnant women should postpone non-essential travel until after the pregnancy. In other countries pregnant women are advised to consider postponing non-essential travel until after the pregnancy. Recommendations for affected countries are found in the 'other risks' section of the individual country pages.

Public Health England provide [health advice for women returning from a country or area with risk for Zika virus transmission](#).

Resources

- [Public Health England: Zika virus](#)
- [Public Health England: Zika virus, sample testing advice](#)
- [Public Health England: Algorithm – Zika advice for pregnant women, those planning pregnancy and their partners](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: Zika virus](#)
- [Zika: Risk assessment](#)
- [World Health Organization: Zika virus and complications: questions and answers](#)