



Fact Sheet

From ReproductiveFacts.org



The Patient Education Website of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine

What do I need to know about Zika virus and trying to have a baby?

The Zika virus:

- Is found in South America, North America, the Caribbean, and Singapore
- There is currently no vaccine or medicine to prevent or treat Zika
- Symptoms can be mild or not present, making it difficult to know if you have it
- Is spread primarily through daytime-active mosquitos
- Can be transmitted through intimate sexual contact, blood transfusion, and from mother to fetus

What are symptoms of Zika virus?

Common symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle pain, and headache. The incubation period is likely just a few days and the symptoms last 2-7 days. But most people will not have symptoms.

What about Zika virus and pregnancy?

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the Zika virus can cause microcephaly when transmitted from mother to fetus. Microcephaly is a medical disorder where the head is smaller than normal and is associated with brain shrinkage and cell death, causing serious developmental problems in the child. Infection with Zika virus during pregnancy is also linked to miscarriage, impaired growth, eye defects, and hearing loss in the child.

Should I be tested for Zika virus?

A blood or urine test can confirm Zika infection. If Zika virus is found in the blood or urine, it is assumed to be present in semen or other bodily fluids, though there is no completely reliable commercially available tests. A negative blood or urine test would not necessarily mean the virus is not present in semen or other bodily fluids. Testing of semen or vaginal fluids is not recommended to determine whether a person could pass Zika virus to their partner during sex because available tests are not yet reliable for these fluids.

When trying to get pregnant, women and men with possible exposure to Zika virus but without clinical illness can consider testing for Zika within 2 weeks of suspected exposure. However, this testing strategy will not necessarily guarantee they are not infected with Zika. Testing for Zika is not universally available or recommended and its cost is not always covered by insurance. Your healthcare provider should know what tests are available in your community, the limitations of these tests, which patients will be allowed testing, and whether testing is covered by insurance.

Will the Zika virus affect my plans to undergo assisted reproduction procedures?

For men and women planning pregnancy who live in an area of active transmission, the risk is always present due to continuous potential exposure. The safest option is to delay pregnancy; however, this is not

always possible particularly in those women older than 35 years.

Individuals using only their own eggs and sperm should follow the same precautions as for a non-assisted pregnancy. For those using donated eggs, sperm, or embryos, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states: use of sperm, eggs, and embryos from living persons are not allowed if the donors:

- Had a diagnosis of Zika virus infection in the past 6 months
- Reside in or traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission within the past 6 months
- Have had sex with a man within the past 6 months who, during the 6 months before this sexual contact:
 - Was diagnosed with Zika virus disease
 - Experienced an illness consistent with Zika virus disease
 - Or traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission

If I've been infected, exposed, or think I might have been exposed to Zika virus, should I wait to get pregnant?

Guidance from the CDC, WHO, and ASRM about timing pregnancy is summarized in the table below.

Other considerations:

- In areas where Zika virus-carrying mosquitos have been identified, women of reproductive age, particularly those who are attempting pregnancy, should take measures to prevent breeding of mosquitos and prevent bites. For the latest information on minimizing Zika infections, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>.
- For the latest information about where the Zika virus-carrying mosquitos have been found, please visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>.
- If you are using donated embryos, eggs, or sperm, you should consider the potential exposure of the embryos to Zika virus, particularly if they were frozen at a time before these screening processes were in effect.
- Laboratory techniques that have been used to prevent the transmission of other viruses, such as HIV, have not been shown to prevent Zika virus at this time.
- Information about Zika virus, including how it is transmitted, ways to test for it, and what effects it has on babies and adults, is changing daily. Guidance published today may not be accurate for counseling and treatment of individuals tomorrow. Check with your healthcare provider and the CDC and FDA for the latest information.

For more information on this and other reproductive health topics, visit www.ReproductiveFacts.org

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| Population | ASRM | WHO | CDC |
|--|---------------|---------------|---|
| Those with symptoms | Wait 6 months | Wait 6 months | Men-wait 6 months Women-wait 8 weeks |
| Those with possible exposure, no symptoms, and a positive test | Wait 6 months | Wait 6 months | Men-wait 6 months Women-wait 8 weeks |
| Those with possible exposure, no symptoms, and a negative test | Wait 8 weeks | Wait 6 months | Men-wait 6 months Women-wait 8 weeks |
| Those with possible exposure, no symptoms, and no test | Wait 6 months | Wait 6 months | Men-wait 6 months Women-wait 8 weeks |

Helpful links to information about Zika virus:

- CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>
- FDA: <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm488612.htm>
- WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/>