

Zika and Pregnancy Planning

Zika is a virus that causes a mild infection in most people but can lead to severe complications. It can cause severe birth defects in an unborn baby if a pregnant woman has the virus. There is no vaccine to prevent Zika infection. If you are planning a pregnancy, you'll need to take steps to take to protect yourself and your partner.

How does Zika spread?

The Zika virus spreads through mosquito bites and sexual activity. To prevent infection, you need to:

- Protect yourself from mosquitoes.
- Use protection during any sexual activity.
- Plan the timing of a pregnancy carefully.

If you want to prevent pregnancy right now

If you are a woman of childbearing age and you live in an area with active Zika, you may choose to prevent pregnancy during this time. Your healthcare provider can prescribe birth control for you. This may be a birth control pill you take by mouth, a small implant in the uterus, or another method. Talk with your healthcare provider about the type of birth control that may work best for you. You should use condoms to prevent pregnancy if you haven't started other birth control.

If you are planning a pregnancy

If you are planning to get pregnant, it's best not to travel to areas with Zika. If you live in or travel to an area with Zika, protect yourself from mosquito bites (see below). You'll also need to take care when you try with your partner.

If you have symptoms or test positive for Zika:

- If you are a woman, don't try for a pregnancy until at least 8 weeks after your Zika symptoms start.
- If you are a man, don't try for a pregnancy until at least 6 months after your Zika symptoms start.

After a trip to an area with Zika, you may still have the virus even if you don't have Zika symptoms. Make sure to:

- Use condoms or don't have sex for at least 6 months.
- Don't try for a pregnancy for at least 6 months.

If you live in an area with Zika, talk with your healthcare provider about the safest times to try for a pregnancy

Preventing mosquito bites

If you live in or travel to an area with Zika, protect yourself from mosquito bites. Make sure to:

- **Get rid of standing water in your yard.** Mosquitoes lay eggs near water. Check pots and planters, outdoor kids' toys, bird baths, and any other containers for puddles of water. Empty the water regularly and keep these areas clean and dry.
- **Choose air conditioning or screens.** At home, don't leave windows or doors open unless they have screens. Patch any holes in the screens. When picking a restaurant, hotel, or other venue, choose places with screens in windows and doors, or air conditioning.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Wear clothing that covers your body to prevent mosquito bites. Choose clothing with long sleeves and long pant legs. Wear socks and shoes to cover your feet and ankles.
- **Use insect skin spray often.** Buy a skin spray that is EPA-approved and contains DEET, picaridin (also called KBR 3023, Bayrepel, or icaridin), oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthan-diol (PMD), or IR3535. Make sure to follow the instructions on the label about how to apply and when to reapply. Use it during the day and at night. EPA-approved insect sprays are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- **Use permethrin.** This is a type of insecticide you can apply to fabrics. If you are going camping, treat your clothing, shoes, and your tent with permethrin. You can also buy gear that's already treated. Don't use permethrin directly on your skin.
- **Sleep with a mosquito net.** Make sure to use a mosquito net if you are sleeping outdoors or in a place with no screens or air conditioning.

If you think you may have Zika

If you live in or you or your partner visits an area with Zika, contact your healthcare provider right away if you have symptoms. Symptoms may be mild and can include fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes, muscle aches, and headache. You may need a blood or urine test to check for the virus. There is no treatment for Zika.