



University of Colorado Hospital  
Children's Hospital Colorado  
University of Colorado School of Medicine

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# Zika Virus

## What is the Zika virus?

- Zika virus is a flavivirus. This is the same family of viruses as West Nile virus and Dengue virus. It was first found in humans in 1968. The Zika virus was most likely introduced into Brazil in 2014, and has led to a wide epidemic that is still ongoing.
- For a current list of places with the Zika virus, please see the CDC's Travel Health Notices: [cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information)

## How is the Zika virus spread?

- Zika virus is transmitted to people through mosquito bites. The most common mosquitos that transmit this virus are Aedes mosquitos.
- The mosquito species most associated with Zika are not common in Colorado.
- There are areas of the United States however where this mosquito does live, and cases of local transmission of Zika virus in the United States are limited to a small area of Florida.
- A mother can transmit Zika virus to her baby during pregnancy.
- There have been reports of sexual transmission of Zika virus.
- There is no current evidence that the virus is spread through breast milk and the CDC encourages all mothers to continue breastfeeding.



## Who is at risk?

- Women who have traveled to affected areas during their current pregnancy
- Due to evidence of sexual transmission, women with partners who have traveled to affected areas during this pregnancy may also be at risk
- For a current list of places with the Zika virus, please see the CDC's Travel Health Notices: [cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information)
- At this time, there is no evidence that a past infection will impact a future pregnancy. However, if a couple is actively trying to get pregnant, they may consider avoiding travel to affected areas.

## If you do travel and are bitten by a Aedes mosquito we don't know:

- How likely you are to get Zika
- How likely it is that the virus will infect your baby
- How likely it is that the baby will develop birth defects from the infection

**Because of these gaps in our knowledge, we do not know if there is a safe time during your pregnancy to travel to an area with Zika.**

## What are the current CDC guidelines?

- Avoid travel to areas where Zika virus is spreading
- If you must travel to these areas, speak with your provider and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.
- If you have a male sexual partner who lives in or has traveled to an area with Zika, either abstain from sex or use condoms consistently and correctly during your pregnancy.

## What should you do if you or your partner has traveled to an affected area?

- Make an appointment to speak with your OB provider to help you decide if you should have blood testing and ultrasound testing. Your provider may decide to start this testing in their office or to refer you to a high-risk pregnancy doctor. (These doctors are sometimes called Perinatologists or Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialists.)
- Blood tests should be done if you have traveled in the last 12 weeks. These tests must be sent to the CDC along with specific paperwork, so you need to be seen by a provider along with the blood draw.
- Ultrasound testing should be able to identify microcephaly (small head size), the birth defect that may be associated with Zika virus transmission to babies during pregnancy. However, when these changes (that we may be able to see with ultrasound exams) occur during pregnancy is not yet known.
- If your provider has questions about testing for Zika virus exposure during pregnancy, they are welcome to contact any of our Maternal-Fetal Medicine Doctors at the Colorado Institute for Maternal and Fetal Health.

## CONTACT US

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## Are there any treatments for Zika virus?

Currently, we don't have a vaccine or any specific treatments for Zika virus.

We hope that as research continues we may learn more about other factors that may influence the risk of Zika virus during pregnancy.

**The information about Zika virus in pregnancy continues to change frequently. The CDC website has great information for both patients and providers and is constantly being updated as we learn more.**

