

What is Zika Virus?

Zika virus is an infection spread by the same mosquitoes that transmit Dengue Fever. There has been a large outbreak of Zika Virus between 2015 and 2017 in South Americas, as well as parts of Asia and Africa (see [here](#)^a for full list of affected countries). As of 2019, the reported cases of Zika infection worldwide have been reducing.

Zika infection can be asymptomatic, or can cause a mild self-limiting illness with fever, joint pain, a rash (which may be itchy), headache and red eyes. Infection during pregnancy has been associated with Congenital Zika Syndrome in the developing baby and may result in a small head (microcephaly) or developmental problems. Very rarely it has also been associated with neurological problems in otherwise healthy adults (such as Guillain-Barré syndrome).

There are tests available to detect current or past infection with Zika but these are only available to patients who have had symptoms after travel to an endemic area. There have also been rare cases of sexual transmission and Public Health England have issued advice on what precautions should be taken following travel.

There is no treatment available for Zika virus and no vaccine is currently available. For more information please go to [NHS Choices](#)^b.

What should I do if I plan to travel to an affected country?

Comprehensive advice can be found on the [NaTHNaC website](#)^c. We run a travel clinic at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases – more information can be found [here](#)^d.

Please note we do not give out travel advice via telephone.

I have returned from an affected country and I have been unwell, what should I do?

If you have ongoing symptoms you may attend [our walk-in clinic](#)^e (open Monday-Friday 9am-4pm) – please see here for further details, and here for advice regarding sexual transmission.

If you have had symptoms but are now well please call us on 020 3456 7891 to confirm that attendance is necessary, and if so how urgent.

I have returned from an affected country and I have not had any symptoms, what should I do?

If you are pregnant inform your midwife who will advise on what local follow-up is indicated.

If you are not pregnant then see [here](#)^f for advice regarding sexual transmission.

If you are undergoing fertility treatment please contact your fertility specialist who will advise you. The general guidance is to avoid unprotected sex and pregnancy for around 3 months after return from an affected country, because of the risk of transmission – more guidance can be found [here](#)^g.

a <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk#atoz>

b <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/zika/>

c <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/4/zika-virus--update-and-advice-for-travellers-including-pregnant-women-and-those-planning-pregnancy>

d <http://www.thehtd.org/travelclinic.aspx>

e <http://www.thehtd.org/emergencies.aspx>

f <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-preventing-infection-by-sexual-transmission>

g <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/394/zika-virus-zikv-update-to-guidance>