

ZIKA & PREGNANCY: WHAT WOMEN SHOULD KNOW



Evidence is mounting that the Zika virus causes both miscarriages and microcephaly, a birth defect in which infants are born with unusually small heads and often have corresponding brain damage, raising concern among pregnant women across the globe. Here are 7 facts to know if you are pregnant and worried about Zika.

1

Consider postponing travel to countries with Zika

The CDC has advised pregnant women to avoid travel to countries that have local transmission of the Zika virus. With no treatment or vaccine, the only way for pregnant women to stay safe is to avoid exposure completely. The list is growing, but includes more than 30 countries and territories in Central and South America and the Caribbean, including Brazil, Barbados, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as Cape Verde in Africa and the Pacific Islands. Keep in mind that half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, and if you're planning to visit a country where the Zika virus is endemic, birth control is even more important than usual, both before your trip and for several weeks after your return.

2

If you're pregnant and recently visited a country with Zika transmission, get tested

Pregnant women who have recently traveled to an area with Zika should consult with their health care provider to determine possible next steps, which may include tests for the virus and close monitoring of both you and your unborn baby.

3

The first trimester poses the greatest risk

Some evidence exists that there is a greater risk when the mother is infected during the first trimester. As many women don't realize they're pregnant until halfway through this time, it is extremely important for anyone who even might be pregnant to take sensible precautions to avoid the virus.

4

Zika clears from the body in about a week

For those recently pregnant and worried about a previous vacation to the Caribbean (or an area with Zika transmission), there is no cause for concern. Research shows the virus clears from blood within a week, and there is no evidence that Zika will affect future pregnancies.

5

Zika is mainly spread by mosquitos, but can be sexually transmitted

Zika virus is spread through the bite of certain *Aedes* species mosquitoes, which also transmit dengue, yellow fever and chikungunya viruses. While rare, it's recently been shown that the virus can be spread from human to human through infected bodily fluids. Men who might be infected should use barrier contraceptives, such as condoms, to avoid infecting their sexual partners.

6

You can safely use insect repellent during pregnancy

There are no current treatments or vaccines for the virus, so preventing bites is key. The CDC advises pregnant women—or those that are breastfeeding—to choose an EPA-registered insect repellent.

7

Breastfeeding is safe

The Zika virus has been detected in human breast milk, but it is currently unknown if the virus is transmissible via this route. The position of the World Health Organization is that due to the great benefits of breastfeeding, women in areas impacted by the virus should not refrain due to Zika.

FOR MORE INFO
ONLINE:

vitalrecord.tamhsc.edu/zika360

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