



## UN Medical Services Division

# ZIKA VIRUS: INFORMATION LEAFLET #1 FOR UN PERSONNEL

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### WHAT IS ZIKA?

Zika is a disease caused by the Zika virus that is primarily spread to people through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected by the virus. For those who get sick, the most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.

For more information, consult WHO/PAHO's comprehensive Zika fact sheets at <http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/> and [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9183&Itemid=41711&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9183&Itemid=41711&lang=en)

### CAN THE VIRUS BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH OTHER MEANS?

In general, Zika virus is transmitted primarily through the *Aedes* mosquito. However, the virus has also been isolated in semen and several cases of possible sexual transmission have been described.

Zika can be transmitted through blood, but this is an infrequent mechanism. The usual recommendations for safe transfusions should be followed.

There is little information on transmission from mother to baby during pregnancy or childbirth. Perinatal transmission has been reported with other vector-borne viruses, such as dengue and chikungunya. Studies are now being conducted on possible mother-to-child transmission of the virus and its possible effects on the baby.

### WHO IS AT RISK OF BECOMING INFECTED?

Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found, and who has not already been infected with Zika virus, can get it primarily through mosquito bites. Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

### WHAT TREATMENT IS THERE?

Treatment for Zika consists of relieving pain, fever, and any other symptom that inconveniences the patient. To prevent dehydration, it is recommended to control the fever, rest, and drink plenty of water. There is no vaccine or specific drug for this virus.

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS OF ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE?

During large outbreaks in French Polynesia and Brazil in 2013 and 2015, respectively, national health authorities reported potential neurological and autoimmune complications of Zika virus disease. Recently in Brazil, local health authorities have observed an increase in Guillain-Barré syndrome that coincided with Zika virus infections in the general public, as well as an increase in babies born with microcephaly in northeast Brazil.

Agencies investigating the Zika outbreaks are finding an increasing body of evidence about the link between Zika virus and microcephaly. However, more investigation is needed to better understand the relationship between microcephaly in babies and the Zika virus. Other potential causes are also being investigated.

## WHAT COUNTRIES HAVE ZIKA?

Specific areas/countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. If you are travelling, please visit the UN Medical Services Division's (MSD) Zika webpage at <https://hr.un.org/page/zika-virus> for the most updated list of countries currently known to have local transmission of Zika. This information is based on WHO data.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT MYSELF FROM GETTING INFECTED?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites. This includes removal of mosquito breeding sites and reducing contact between mosquitoes and people by using insect repellent, clothing, physical barriers, and mosquito nets. Please consult MSD's leaflet on mosquito bite avoidance for more information:

[https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/ZikaPersonalProtection\\_UN%20Staff\\_MSD\\_2016-02-09\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/ZikaPersonalProtection_UN%20Staff_MSD_2016-02-09_EN_0.pdf).

To prevent potential sexual transmission of Zika virus, sexual partners of pregnant women who live in or have returned from areas of active Zika transmission are advised to use safer sexual practices or abstain from sexual activity for the duration of the pregnancy. For more detailed information on potential sexual transmission of Zika virus, please consult WHO's interim guidance at

<http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/sexual-transmission-prevention/en/>.

## CAN I TRAVEL TO ZIKA-AFFECTED AREAS?

As an occupational health service with an obligation to manage occupational exposure to harm for UN Personnel, MSD advises that pregnant UN Personnel should not undertake duty travel or be relocated to countries/areas where local transmission of Zika virus is known to occur. Women who are seeking pregnancy should obtain individual advice from their medical practitioner on risk management regarding their plans to travel into a Zika-affected area.

All UN Personnel travelling to a Zika-affected area should closely follow MSD's advisory on mosquito bite avoidance at [https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/ZikaPersonalProtection\\_UN%20Staff\\_MSD\\_2016-02-09\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/ZikaPersonalProtection_UN%20Staff_MSD_2016-02-09_EN_0.pdf).

Additionally, MSD has developed a comprehensive set of recommendations for pregnant and non-pregnant UN Personnel and dependents who reside in or plan to travel into countries/areas where local transmission of Zika is known to occur. Please consult the latest version of these recommendations (MSD Risk Mitigation Plan) on our Zika webpage (<https://hr.un.org/page/zika-virus>). You should implement the recommendations according to which risk category you fall under.

## **HOW DO I FIND A LOCAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?**

If not already done, all UN personnel are advised to be knowledgeable about how to access their local or UN health care services in case they should become ill with the above symptoms. Staff should research and ensure that they have all the contact details of such a local or UN healthcare provider handy in the event they should need this information.

## **IS ZIKA-RELATED HEALTHCARE COVERED BY MY INSURANCE?**

All third party administrators (TPAs) of our insurance plans have confirmed Zika virus testing is covered under our plans; ultrasound for pregnancies will also be covered.

US-based TPAs (Aetna and Empire BlueCross BlueShield) will cover monthly ultrasounds (throughout the pregnancy term) for pregnant women who feel they have been exposed to the Zika virus; they will not deny monthly routine fetal follow-up ultrasound (CPT code 76816).

Cigna International will consider increased ultrasounds medically justified and members will not be denied this benefit.

## **I AM PREGNANT IN A ZIKA-AFFECTED AREA AND AM INTERESTED IN RECEIVING MORE INFORMATION. WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

Pregnant women who are located in Zika-affected areas should register for a confidential surveillance register by emailing [msdpublichealth@un.org](mailto:msdpublichealth@un.org) to receive targeted information and care regarding Zika virus during pregnancy.

## **I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ON ZIKA. WHOM DO I CONTACT?**

For any other questions related to Zika or this FAQ, please contact [msdpublichealth@un.org](mailto:msdpublichealth@un.org). The WHO website on Zika available at <http://www.who.int/emergencies/zika-virus/en/> should also be freely consulted.