



ZIKA VIRUS: A GUIDE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

COUNSELLING TRAVELLERS

Consider these recommendations when counselling your patients who are thinking about travel, or have booked travel, to countries with mosquito-borne Zika virus.

ASSESS RISK OF ZIKA VIRUS EXPOSURE

- Zika virus is primarily spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Discuss whether Zika virus is being spread in the planned area of travel. See our [Travel Health Notice on Zika](#) on [Travel.gc.ca](#) for more information.
- Discuss associated risks, as well as the patient's preferences and values. Some travellers may wish to postpone travel to areas of risk.

PROVIDE SPECIAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREGNANT WOMEN, AND MEN AND WOMEN PLANNING A PREGNANCY

- Zika virus infection during pregnancy may cause birth defects, including microcephaly.
- Advise pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy to **avoid travel** to countries, or areas in the United States, with reported mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission.
- Discuss impact if they do travel (potential outcomes on fetus) and risks of sexual transmission (see recommendations below).
- If travel cannot be avoided or postponed, inform your patients to follow strict mosquito bite prevention measures and to follow the travel recommendations for returning travellers.

REVIEW PREVENTION MEASURES

- Inform your patients that the best protection against Zika virus is mosquito bite prevention through all hours of the day and night.
- Remind them to:
 - » Use **insect repellent** correctly and consistently: follow directions on the label
 - » **Cover up** and wear light-coloured long-sleeved shirts, pants and a hat
 - » Stay in rooms with air conditioning and places that have intact window and door screens. If they are not intact, use bed nets.

DISCUSS SYMPTOMS

- Explain to your patients that most people infected with Zika virus won't have symptoms or will have only mild symptoms.
- The most common symptoms are: low-grade fever, rash, red eyes, muscle or joint pain, lack of energy and headaches.

DISCUSS WHEN TO SEEK CARE

- Pregnant women, including those wishing to become pregnant and/or their partners, those with underlying medical conditions, or those who develop more serious symptoms that could be consistent with Zika virus infection, should see a health care provider and tell them where they have been travelling or living.



REVIEW HOW TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION AFTER RETURNING HOME

- Zika virus can be sexually transmitted. Review the following recommendations with female and male travellers.

PREGNANT WOMEN:

- Should **ALWAYS** use condoms or avoid having sex **for the duration of their pregnancy** if their partner has travelled to an area with Zika virus.

WOMEN WISHING TO BECOME PREGNANT:

- Should wait **at least 2 months** before trying to conceive to ensure that any possible Zika virus has cleared the body.

MALE TRAVELLERS:

- If their partner is pregnant, should use condoms correctly and consistently, or avoid having sex, for the duration of the pregnancy.
- Should wait **6 months** before trying for a pregnancy by using a condom correctly and consistently, or by avoiding having sex.
- Should consider using condoms or avoid having sex with **any** partner for **6 months**.

SEE THE COMMITTEE TO ADVISE ON TROPICAL MEDICINE AND TRAVEL STATEMENT ON ZIKA VIRUS FOR DETAILED INFORMATION:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/16vol42/dr-rm42-5/ar-01-eng.php?id=zika_virus_16_phac_catmat

For more information: Canada.ca/zika-virus