



ZIKA VIRUS: A GUIDE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

COUNSELLING TRAVELLERS

Consider these recommendations when counselling your patients who are:

- thinking about travel
- have booked travel to Zika-affected countries or areas

ASSESS THE 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. Review our [Travel Health Notice on Zika](#) on [Travel.gc.ca](#) for more information.
- associated risks, such as Congenital Zika Syndrome, 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 to men and women planning a pregnancy.**

Advise pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy to **avoid travel** to Zika-affected countries or areas.

Discuss:

- impact (potential outcomes on fetus) if they do travel
- risks of sexual transmission (see recommendations)

If travel cannot be avoided or postponed, tell your patients to follow:

- strict mosquito bite prevention measures
- travel recommendations for returning travellers

REVIEW PREVENTION MEASURES

Inform your patients that the best protection against Zika virus is mosquito bite prevention both during the day and night. Remind them to:

- use insect repellent on exposed skin: follow label directions
- use bed nets: they can also cover playpens, cribs or strollers
- cover up: wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- stay in:
 - » rooms with air conditioning
 - » places that have intact window and door screens

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:

- rash
- headaches



- conjunctivitis
- lack of energy
- low-grade fever
- muscle or joint pain

DISCUSS WHEN TO SEEK CARE

The people who should visit a health care provider after travel to Zika-affected countries or areas:

- those with underlying medical conditions
- pregnant women, including those wanting to become pregnant
- partners of pregnant women, including partners of women wanting to become pregnant
- those who develop more serious symptoms that could be Zika virus infection

REVIEW HOW TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION AFTER RETURNING HOME

Zika virus can be sexually transmitted. Review this list of recommendations with female and male travellers:

PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD:

- **always** use condoms correctly for the duration of their pregnancy, or
- avoid having sex for the duration of their pregnancy if their partner has travelled to a Zika-affected country or area

WOMEN WITH A MALE PARTNER WHO DID NOT TRAVEL WANTING TO BECOME PREGNANT SHOULD:

- **wait at least 2 months** after travel before trying to conceive. This will ensure that any possible Zika virus infection has cleared the body.

MEN WHO HAVE A PREGNANT PARTNER SHOULD:

- **always use condoms correctly for the duration of the pregnancy, or**
- **avoid having sex for the duration of the pregnancy**

MEN WHO ARE PLANNING A PREGNANCY WITH THEIR PARTNERS SHOULD:

- **wait 6 months** before trying to conceive
- **always** use condoms correctly, or
- avoid having sex

OTHER MEN SHOULD:

- **always** use condoms correctly, or
- avoid having sex with **any** partner for **6 months**

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

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/zika-virus-prevention-treatment-recommendations.html>

For more information consult [Canada.ca/zika-virus](https://www.canada.ca/zika-virus)