

Zika Virus Information Sheet

Population Health Hawke's Bay District Health Board | 76 Wellesley Road, PO Box 447, Napier
Phone: 06 834 1815 | **Fax:** 06 834 1816 | **www.hawkesbay.health.nz**

What is it?

Zika, pronounced "zee-ka" is a viral disease which is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquitoes that can spread Zika virus are not normally found in New Zealand, but they are found in many other countries.

Pregnant women can pass the infection to their unborn child, which can cause serious brain abnormalities in the baby.

Infections spread by mosquito bites are called arboviruses. There are a number of other arboviruses which are described briefly at the end of this information sheet.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms usually start within 3 to 12 days. Only around 1 in 5 people who are infected with Zika virus feel unwell.

Symptoms include:

- fever
- pain in the joints, especially hands and feet, and sometimes swelling
- muscle pain
- headache
- red eyes
- rash.

Symptoms usually last 4 to 7 days.

If you have these symptoms and you have recently travelled to another country you need to see a doctor and tell them where you have been.

How serious is it?

The symptoms of Zika are usually mild, but pregnant women with Zika can give the infection to their unborn babies. This can cause an abnormality called microcephaly, pronounced "my-crow-sef-alee", where a baby's head is small and their brain

does not develop properly. Zika may also cause a rare condition called Guillan-Barre Syndrome, pronounced "gee-on burr-ay", which causes arm and leg weakness. There is a lot that we still do not know about Zika and more research is being done.

Who is most at risk?

Mosquitoes that can spread Zika are not found in New Zealand. All cases of Zika in New Zealand have been in people who have recently travelled to other countries. The virus can be found in parts of Africa, southern Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas.

How could I get infected?

Zika is spread by mosquito bites from a type of mosquito which does not live in New Zealand. If you travel to an area where this mosquito lives, and where there is Zika, you could be infected by a mosquito bite. Zika has also been sexually transmitted.

How do I protect myself and others?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika.

If you are travelling overseas, check the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control website](#) for the most up-to-date list of countries with Zika (link over the page), and talk to your doctor.

Because Zika is spread by mosquitoes, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten.

- Use insect repellent, and check the label to make sure they contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535.
- Cover as much of the body as possible with long, light-coloured clothing.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.

- Use clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) that has been treated with the insecticide permethrin.

If you have Zika you can give it to another person through sex.

Advice for women

- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant soon, avoid travelling to an area with Zika if possible.
- If you travel to an area with Zika, protect yourself against mosquito bites and use contraception to prevent pregnancy.
- If you have been to an area with Zika, wait at least 8 weeks before trying to get pregnant if you have had no Zika symptoms or 6 months if you or your partner have a confirmed Zika infection.
- If you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant and have recently travelled to an area with Zika, get checked by your doctor even if you do not feel sick.

Advice for men

- If you have travelled to an area with Zika and have a pregnant partner, use condoms or do not have sex (oral, vaginal, and anal) for the rest of the pregnancy, whether you have symptoms or not
- If you have travelled to an area with Zika and have a partner who might get pregnant, use condoms or do not have sex (oral, vaginal, and anal) for at least 6 months after leaving an area with Zika virus, whether you have symptoms or not.

It is important to check the [Ministry of Health website](#) (link below) for the most up to date advice about Zika.

Will I need to take time off work, school or preschool?

This will depend on how unwell you feel. Ask your doctor about this.

How is it treated?

There are no particular medicines for Zika. If you have Zika you should get plenty of rest, drink plenty of water and take paracetamol for pain and fever. If you feel worse, you should see your doctor.

It is important to see a doctor if you notice a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes while, or up to 4 weeks after, you are in an area with Zika.

What are other diseases spread by mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes can give you Murray Valley encephalitis, Kunjin, Kokobera, Japanese encephalitis, West Nile virus, Ross River, Barmah Forest, Sindbis, Chikungunya and Dengue Fever. None of these diseases are currently found in mosquitoes in New Zealand. They are spread by infected mosquitoes overseas, and cause similar symptoms to Zika. More information about Dengue Fever and Chikungunya can be found in our other information sheets.

Where can I get further information?

For further information on Zika or the other diseases spread by mosquitoes please contact your doctor or Hawke's Bay District Health Board Population Health on (06) 834 1815. You can also phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 at any time of the day or night to speak to a registered nurse.

You can also find more information on these websites:

- www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/zika-virus
- www.who.int/topics/zika
- www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/zika_virus_infection
- www.safetravel.govt.nz/news/zika-virus