

**Information for Students/Staff Traveling to or Returning from Areas where  
Zika Virus is prevalent  
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As you may know from extensive media coverage of the Zika virus, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) has issued a travel alert for regions with Zika virus outbreaks, including parts of South America, Central America, Mexico, Cape Verde, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. The situation is still developing, which is why there are frequent updates and changes to the list of impacted areas. For updates go to <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

**Zika virus and illness**

Based on a growing body of evidence, the Zika virus is a cause of Guillain-Barre syndrome (progressive paralysis) and microcephaly (a condition where the brain and skull do not grow normally). It is transmitted in several ways:

- By the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito (primary means of transmission)
- Passed from a pregnant mother to her fetus
- Spread sexually through semen (has been found in semen for up to 6 weeks after Zika infection),
- Spread through blood transfusions

**Symptoms of Zika infection**

Only 20% of people infected with Zika virus have any symptoms. Those that do typically have a rash, fever, joint pain and red eyes. Symptoms last for 2 to 7 days and are generally mild. The virus remains in the blood of an infected person for about a week after transmission but it can be found longer in some people. The incubation period (time from infection to signs of illness is 3-12 days.) There is currently no vaccine for Zika.

**Recommendations for prevention of maternal/fetal and sexual transmission**

**Pregnant women or women trying to become pregnant:**

- Should not travel to areas with active Zika transmission during their entire pregnancy.
- Should use condoms or avoid sexual contact with male partners who have traveled to areas with active Zika transmission for the duration of the pregnancy

**Regarding non pregnant women whose male partner has traveled to or resides in an area with active Zika transmission**

- Couples in which a man had confirmed Zika virus infection or clinical illness consistent with Zika virus disease should consider using condoms or abstaining from sex for at least 6 months after onset of illness
- Couples in which a man traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission but did not develop symptoms of Zika virus disease should consider using condoms or abstaining from sex for at least 8 weeks after departure from the area.

## **Recommendations for prevention of transmission by mosquito bites**

All travelers to Zika affected areas should:

- Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts
- Treat clothing with permethrin
- Use mosquito repellent on exposed skin (DEET, Picaridin or IR3535). If you use both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first and then the repellent. Do not spray insect repellent on the skin or under your clothing.
- Help decrease the number of mosquitoes inside and outside of your home or hotel room by emptying standing water from containers such as flowerpots or buckets.
- Stay/sleep in air conditioned or screened housing and use a bed net if no a/c is available.
- Continue with the above precautions for several weeks after return (This is to prevent local spread of the Zika virus. If a mosquito bites someone who is infected, that mosquito can then pass the infection to other people.)

Students who develop symptoms of Zika infection within 14 days of returning from a country where Zika transmission is high should contact their Healthcare Provider or Student Health Services for further evaluation. Staff should contact their Healthcare Provider.

## **Helpful Resources:**

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/>

CDC Zika virus home page

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

CDC Preparedness and Response Guide

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/public-health-partners/risk-based-prep.html>

CDC travel Advisory Site

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>

Pan-American Health Org. Zika page

[http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11585&Itemid=41688&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11585&Itemid=41688&lang=en)

World Health Organization Zika page

<http://www.who.int/topics/zika/en/>

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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