



Travel Health Care Products

5 THINGS A TRAVELLER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ZIKA

In our 23+ year history in travel health we have never seen an infectious disease thread ruling the media and creating world wide concern as with Zika virus in the last week. Understandable, since the health risk is a major one.

So, let's answer the five most frequently asked questions that we have received in the last days

- 1) what is Zika virus exactly?
- 2) Where is Zika present?
- 3) What does it mean for travellers?
- 4) How can I protect myself from Zika?
- 5) Why is it pandemic now, while existing for over 60 years?

1) What is Zika virus exactly?

Zika is a virus. Zika is related to *Dengue* and *Chikungunya*. One out of four people carrying Zika will develop symptoms. Symptoms occur 2-7 days after the bite/ infection and last for a couple of days. Symptoms known are mild fever, skin rash, head ache, joint pain and conjunctivitis. Zika may potentially cause Guillain-Barré syndrome or microcephaly in babies. There is no vaccine available. Zika virus is transmitted by mosquitoes of the *Aedes* family. These are (mostly) daytime biting mosquitoes active in inhabited areas. Pregnant women have the same risk of Zika infection as the rest of the population.

2) Where is Zika present?

Zika is present (source WHO, 29th January 2016) in Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique | Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Suriname, US Virgin Islands, Venezuela. Here is an actual map where Zika is present: http://www.paho.org/hq/images/stories/AD/HSD/IR/Viral_Diseases/Zika-Virus/2016-cha-autoch-human-cases-zika-virus-ew-3.jpg?ua=1

3) What does it mean for travellers?

Travellers need to know if their desired travel destination is a Zika risk area. So check before making your travel plans final. If you do choose to a Zika risk area, make a well thought decision to go ahead with your travel plans. Pregnant women should consider NOT going ahead and maybe choose a non-Zika destination or postpone the trip. If you do decide to travel to a Zika risk destination, that's fine, but do take note of the precautions necessary to stay healthy!

4) How can I protect myself from Zika?

Simple. No mosquito (bite), no Zika. So, you know now that a (daytime) biting mosquito can transmit Zika virus. Our advice is:

- a. Clean up water depots around you. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in it. You don't want those eggs to hatch creating more mosquitoes around you!
- b. Don't get bitten. Here are our 3 golden rules:
 - i. Wear mosquito proof clothing and [\(permethrin impregnated\) socks](#)
 - ii. Apply high grade insect repellent with [DEET](#) or [Picaridin](#) or [Citriodiol \(lemon eucalyptus\)](#) on exposed skin
 - iii. Sleep under an [impregnated mosquito net](#)

5) Why is it pandemic now, while existing for over 60 years?

Well, difficult question. Zika virus is the next in line to gain territory, after West-Nile virus in the nineties, Dengue and Chikungunya in more recent years. The mosquito species (*Aedes* family) is an important carrier of these viruses. Travelers play a role in spreading the geographical area, as do the second hand tire trade and as did the Lucky bamboo trade. Zika will definitely not be the last infectious disease we will see arise and spread. Habitual change is necessary to contain or better decrease the mosquito population and to promote personal protection against mosquito bites.

Having said all this, panic will not help, common sense will help. Do contribute to the latter.

Arnoud Aalbersberg, co-founder Tropicare, the company that provides Safe travels, great stories (29th of January 2016)