

## Zika virus: what you need to know

### WHAT IS ZIKA VIRUS?

Zika virus disease is mainly passed on to humans by the bite of a mosquito found in many countries, but not New Zealand.

It can also be passed on from pregnant women to the fetus, and through sexual contact as it is present in the semen of infected men.



The Zika virus is most commonly spread by infected mosquitoes.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms are flu-like, and include low-grade fevers, rash, muscle and joint pain, and conjunctivitis. Many people may not know they have been infected.

### WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Although the disease itself is often mild, infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects. In 5-15% of women infected with Zika, it has been linked to the birth of babies with a brain defect called microcephaly (smaller than normal head).

### WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE RISK OF ZIKA?

Outbreaks have been reported in Africa, the Americas and Asia. Increasing spread has been noted in the Pacific Islands including Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

### WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN TO ONE OF THESE COUNTRIES?

Based on the available guidelines the following recommendations are present for couples planning a pregnancy who are returning from high risk areas, this includes symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals:

- Where the couple have both travelled to a high-risk area: use condoms or abstain from sex for at least 3 months from the male partner's symptom onset or last possible Zika virus exposure
- Where only the female partner has travelled to a high-risk area: use condoms or abstain from sex for at least 8 weeks after the onset of symptoms or last possible Zika virus exposure
- Where only the male partner has travelled to a high-risk area: use condoms or abstain from sex for 3 months after the onset of symptoms or last possible Zika virus exposure

New Zealand currently has no highly specific blood test to detect Zika infection, so the precautions are based on travel history and symptoms.

## **TRAVELLING TO COUNTRIES WITH ZIKA RISK**

Because of uncertainty about the safe period, our specialists advise clients to use condoms or abstain from sex if they are planning to conceive in the next 3 months and will be visiting an affected country during that time.

Talk to our staff about other measures such as delaying treatment or freezing semen before you visit these countries.

## **WHAT ARE REPROMED'S GUIDELINES FOR EGG AND SPERM DONORS?**

- If you are planning to donate eggs or sperm and have been bitten by a mosquito from a Zika virus area or have symptoms, you will unfortunately not be eligible to donate
- If you have visited an affected region but have no bites or symptoms, you will be required to delay your donation for 6 months

## **MORE INFORMATION**

For a Zika travel map go to:  
[wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/world-map-areas-with-zika](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/world-map-areas-with-zika)

NZ Ministry of Health website:  
[www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/zika-virus](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/zika-virus)

**Talk to your Repromed doctor if you have questions about Zika virus.**