

# ZIKA VIRUS ALERT

Updated information for NSW Obstetricians & Midwives



Health

Please distribute this information to all staff

## Key points for Obstetricians & Midwives:

1. Australian Zika virus guidelines to reduce the risk of sexual transmission and assess couples at risk have been updated
2. Travel warnings remain in place for pregnant women to defer travel to areas with active Zika virus transmission, including Brazil during the Olympics

### Background

- Zika virus (ZIKV) is a mosquito-borne virus transmitted by the exotic *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Sexual transmission and congenital infection can also occur.
- Many countries in the Americas and the Pacific have reported recent outbreaks. See the list at: [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-zika-countries.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-zika-countries.htm)
- There is scientific consensus that pregnant women with ZIKV can transmit the infection to their unborn babies with potentially serious consequences, including microcephaly.

### Advice for pregnant women

- Australian guidance to reduce the risk of a pregnant woman becoming infected with ZIKV and to prevent transmission of ZIKV to sexual partners has been updated. This guidance is summarised in the attached table and is available at the following website: [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-zika.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-zika.htm)
- Women who are pregnant or who are considering pregnancy should defer travel to areas with active outbreaks of ZIKV, including Brazil during the Olympics. If they choose to travel to ZIKV-affected areas they should strictly follow guidance to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.
- Pregnant women should also avoid unprotected sex with a partner who has recently travelled to a ZIKV-affected area for the duration of the pregnancy.

### Recommendations for pregnant women who have travelled to ZIKV-affected areas

- Depending on the time since potential exposure and symptoms, PCR and/or serology are used to assess the likelihood of ZIKV infection and the need for referral for specialist assessment.
- Testing for ZIKV infection is available at arbovirus reference laboratories. Consult with your local pathology provider regarding appropriate tests and specimens.
- Testing for ZIKV infection is not required as part of routine antenatal screening when there is no history of travel to a Zika-affected area for the woman or their sexual partner.
- A positive test for ZIKV infection in a pregnant woman does not mean the fetus will be affected – seek expert infectious disease or pathology and obstetric advice.

### Symptoms and signs

- Most ZIKV infections are asymptomatic. Symptomatic disease is generally mild and characterised by fever, maculopapular rash, headache, arthralgia, and non-purulent conjunctivitis.
- Symptoms develop 3 – 12 days after a bite from an infected mosquito and last 4-7 days.
- Be aware that a range of other travel-related communicable diseases (such as malaria or dengue) pose risks for pregnant women and may present with similar clinical features to ZIKV.

### Further information and resources from NSW Health

- ZIKV information: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/Zika-virus.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/Zika-virus.aspx)
- Advice for travellers to the Summer Olympics - Rio 2016: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/Travel-advice-Summer-Olympics-Rio-2016.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/Travel-advice-Summer-Olympics-Rio-2016.aspx)
- Zika Travel Alert poster for Maternity/Antenatal Clinics: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/zika-maternity-travel-poster.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/zika-maternity-travel-poster.aspx) or order through the Better Health Centre: [bhc@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bhc@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au) (ref #160053).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Sheppeard'.

Dr Vicky Sheppeard  
Director, Communicable Diseases Branch

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Nicholl'.

A/Prof Michael Nicholl  
Senior Clinical Advisor, Obstetrics

## Table of recommendations regarding Zika virus sexual transmission and pregnancy advice

The goals of this advice are to prevent a pregnant female from becoming infected with Zika, and to prevent sexual transmission of Zika to any sexual partners. All people with symptoms consistent with a Zika virus infection should be tested as appropriate. Discussion with a pathologist is advised.

Traveller	Travel Advice	Pregnancy advice	Sexual transmission advice	Testing#
<b>Pregnant female</b>	Defer travel to Zika-affected countries	-	Avoid unprotected sex with a partner who has travelled to a Zika-affected area for the duration of pregnancy	Testing should be offered to pregnant women who have potentially been exposed to Zika virus, either through travel or sex
<b>Female currently attempting pregnancy</b>	Defer travel to Zika-affected countries or defer pregnancy. If travelling, follow Zika travel precautions*	Avoid pregnancy while travelling and for at least 8 weeks following the last day in a Zika-affected country. This is regardless of presence of Zika symptoms. Advice relating to a partner who has travelled also applies.	Avoid unprotected sex with a partner who has travelled to a Zika-affected area for at least a) 8 weeks if partner remains asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if partner has a confirmed infection	Testing of couples planning pregnancy can be considered 4 weeks after the last day in a Zika-affected country
<b>Female at risk of pregnancy (of childbearing age and not using a reliable form of contraception) or planning pregnancy</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	Avoid pregnancy while travelling and for at least 8 weeks following the last day in a Zika-affected country. This is regardless of presence of Zika symptoms. Advice relating to a partner who has travelled also applies.	Avoid unprotected sex with a partner who has travelled to a Zika-affected area for at least a) 8 weeks if partner remains asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if partner has a confirmed infection	Testing of couples planning pregnancy can be considered at least 4 weeks after the last day in a Zika-affected country
<b>Female NOT at risk of pregnancy</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	-	Avoid unprotected sex with a partner who has travelled to a Zika-affected area for at least a) 8 weeks if partner remains asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if partner has a confirmed infection	-
<b>Male with a pregnant partner</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	-	Avoid unprotected sex for the duration of the pregnancy	Testing of asymptomatic men can be considered 4 weeks after the last day in a Zika-affected country
<b>Male with a partner at risk of pregnancy (of childbearing age and not using a reliable form of contraception) or planning pregnancy</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	Avoid pregnancy for at least a) 8 weeks if remain asymptomatic b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if a Zika infection is confirmed	Avoid unprotected sex for at least a) 8 weeks if remain asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if a Zika infection is confirmed	Testing of asymptomatic men can be considered at least 4 weeks after the last day in a Zika-affected country
<b>Male with a partner NOT at risk of pregnancy (male or female)</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	-	Avoid unprotected sex for at least a) 8 weeks if remain asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if a Zika infection is confirmed	-
<b>Sperm Donor</b>	Follow Zika travel precautions*	Do not donate sperm for at least a) 8 weeks if remain asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if a Zika infection is confirmed	Do not donate sperm for at least a) 8 weeks if remain asymptomatic, or b) 6 months from the time of diagnosis if a Zika infection is confirmed	-

\*ZIKA TRAVEL PRECAUTIONS – USE STRINGENT MEASURES TO AVOID MOSQUITO BITES; AVOID UNPROTECTED SEX (VAGINAL, ORAL AND ANAL)