

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Patient Information

**This leaflet contains advice for patients who are considering travelling to or have already travelled to an area affected by the Zika Virus, and are planning to try to conceive naturally, proceed with fertility treatment or to donate sperm or eggs**

#### **What is the Zika Virus and how do I get it?**

The Zika virus is a disease spread by mosquitoes, the Aedes mosquito in particular. It can be spread through being bitten by an infected mosquito or through unprotected sexual intercourse with someone who has been infected by the virus.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Although it is a mild infection, and the majority of people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms, there can be serious consequences in the event of a pregnancy where it can cause serious birth defects (e.g. microcephaly – abnormally small heads)

For those with symptoms, it tends to cause a mild, short-lived (2 to 7 days) illness that include a combination of the following:

Rash, itching/pruritus, fever, headache, generalized aching and muscle pain, conjunctivitis, lower back pain

#### **What should you do if you are planning on trying to become pregnant?**

Couples planning pregnancy should check the Zika risk for their destination before travel and consider any travel advisories.

Please consult the GOV.UK website [www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk) for specific country information.

Couples planning a pregnancy who are travelling to an area with high or moderate risk of Zika virus transmission should delay conception to reduce the risk of the developing fetus being exposed to Zika virus, by consistently using effective contraception and barrier methods during and after travel.

Female traveller, symptomatic or asymptomatic, should not try to conceive naturally, donate gametes or proceed with fertility treatment for 28 days

Male traveller, symptomatic or asymptomatic, should not try to conceive naturally, donate gametes or proceed with fertility treatment for 6 months

**What should you do if you have travelled to a high-risk area and think that you may be infected?**

An antibody test can show if you carry the infection and if this is negative then you can sign consent and commence treatment.

Your GP who may be willing request this test however NHS testing is not routinely available for individuals who do not have symptoms consistent with the Zika virus infection. Third party private companies can carry out this testing for you at a cost.

**Is there any treatment for the Zika Virus infection?**

There is no specific anti-viral treatment available. However, as the Zika virus infection is usually mild and short-lived, no specific treatment is required.

Supportive nursing care and relief of symptoms are the standard treatment. If symptoms are troublesome, you will be advised to get plenty of rest, drink adequate fluids and manage any pain or fever with regular Paracetamol and other cooling measures.

**What are the risks if you acquire the infection and get pregnant?**

The risk of birth defects appears to be low compared with other viral infections however the baby will be more at risk of acquiring the infection if the transmission was in early pregnancy. It can cause birth-defects, severely affecting brain development and hence cause disabilities in babies.

Your GP will refer you to the Consultant Obstetrician and you will need serial ultrasounds to monitor the growth of the baby and to detect any anomalies in case the baby is affected.

**Is there a vaccine to prevent the Zika Virus?**

There is currently no vaccine or drug available to prevent the ZIKA infection.

**What can I do to reduce my chance of getting Zika virus if I cannot avoid travelling?**

Travellers to areas with moderate or high risk of Zika virus transmission should take all possible measures to minimise the chances of mosquito bites. This includes

- Wearing light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes that cover as much exposed skin as possible
- Because the Aedes mosquito is most active during daylight hours, it is important that travellers to these areas cover up during the daytime as well as the evening
- Clothing can be treated with an insecticide (e.g. permethrin) which kills insects, including mosquitoes, on contact
- N, N-Diethyl meta toluamide (**DEET**) based insect repellents are the most effective products widely available, and have been in use for over 50 years. Preparations with concentrations of DEET up to 50% are commonly available

- When both sunscreen and insect repellents are required, the insect repellent should be applied over the sunscreen

**PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US WITH ANY QUERIES OR CONCERNS**

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**Useful Resources:**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk>

<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home>

**To be filed with outpatient notes on EZ-notes**

I/We have read and understand the Zika Virus patient information sheet.

I/We have not travelled, do not plan to travel in the near future and have not been closely associated with anyone who has been to a country affected by the Zika virus listed on the 'Zika Virus: country specific risk' on the 'GOV.UK' website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk#atoz> within the period specified below, based on the advice of the ECDC.

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name of first partner \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

NHS/Hospital Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of second partner \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

NHS/Hospital Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_