

# Information

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## for County Councillors

From:	Trudi Grant – Director of Public Health
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Date:	5 <sup>th</sup> February 2016
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To:	All County Councillors
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### Zika virus (ZIKV)

The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne infection, which isn't harmful in most cases. However, it may be harmful for pregnancies, as it's been potentially linked to birth defects namely an increasing number of cases of babies born with smaller-than-normal heads — a condition known as congenital microcephaly.

Countries with the virus ( as of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016, this is subject to change and for updated details of countries affected visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus>):

American Samoa, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curacao, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Maldives, Martinique, Mexico, New Caledonia, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, US Virgin Islands, Venezuela <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus>

### Advice to travellers, in particular pregnant women

Transmission of ZIKV is primarily by 'Aedes' mosquitoes which are not present in the UK. There is one report of sexual transmission of the infection. A small number of cases have occurred by transmission from mother to foetus via the placenta.

All travellers to countries where there is active ZIKV transmission should seek travel health advice from their GP or a travel clinic well in advance of their trip and consult the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) website <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk> for up to date information on current outbreaks and

country information.

Travellers should follow standard mosquito protection advice. Since the mosquitos linked with ZIKV are predominantly day-biters, advice is as follows:

- Avoid being bitten during the daytime (especially during mid-morning and late afternoon to dusk, when the mosquito is most active)
- **Use insect repellent that contains N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET) on exposed skin – the repellent is safe to use during pregnancy and should be applied to skin after sunscreen is applied**
- **Wear loose clothing that covers your arms and legs**
- **Sleep under a mosquito net in areas where malaria is also risk**
- Protection against night time biting mosquitoes may also be necessary in areas where malaria is a risk.
- Pregnant women should consider avoiding travel to an area where an active ZIKV outbreak is reported. If travel is unavoidable, or they live in areas where an ongoing ZIKV outbreak is being reported, they should take scrupulous insect bite avoidance measures, during the day and night. Tailored advice for pregnancy and travel is available at: <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/pregnancy/>
- Women planning to become pregnant should discuss their travel plans with their healthcare provider to assess the risk of infection with ZIKV and receive advice on mosquito bite avoidance measures.
- Pregnant women should inform their obstetrician or midwife if they have recently travelled to a country where there is active ZIKV transmission whether or not they have had an illness compatible with ZIKV infection during or within 2 weeks of returning home.
- If a female partner is at risk of getting pregnant, or is already pregnant, condom use is advised for a male traveller:
  - for 28 days after his return from a Zika transmission area if he had no symptoms of unexplained fever and rash
  - for 6 months following recovery if a clinical illness compatible with Zika virus infection or laboratory confirmed Zika virus infection was reported

## Symptoms

Most people don't have any symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they are usually mild and last around two to seven days. Commonly reported symptoms include:

- a low-grade fever
- joint pain (with possible swelling, mainly in the smaller joints of the hands and feet)
- itching
- rash, which is sometimes itchy
- conjunctivitis (red eyes)
- headache
- eye pain

Further information is available on NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2016/01January/Pages/Zika-virus-your-questions-answered.aspx>

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