



## HHS Health Advisory for Responders

September 5, 2017

**TO:** All Deploying Emergency Responders

**SUBJECT:** Zika Health Alert in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands

This health advisory is provided for all employees deploying to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to consider how Zika may affect you, your pregnant partner, or your plans if trying to get pregnant. There is active Zika mosquito transmission in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly advises against travel to Zika-affected areas for pregnant women because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause microcephaly, a serious birth defect of the brain and skull. Partners of pregnant women and couples planning pregnancy should know [possible risks to pregnancy and take preventive steps](#). Before travel, those planning pregnancy should talk to their doctor or other healthcare provider.

For questions or concerns, contact your agency for additional deployment guidance.

**Most people infected with Zika virus do not feel sick. Even if you do not feel sick, after returning to the United States from an area with Zika you should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for three weeks so that you do not spread Zika to uninfected mosquitos.**

- See [Zika Travel Notice for the US Virgin Islands](#)
- See [Zika Travel Notice for Puerto Rico](#)

Visit the CDC Travels' Health site for more information at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

### **Zika Sexual Transmission Precautions**

For those who have had possible exposure via recent travel, the suggested timeframe to wait before trying to get pregnant is at least 8 weeks for women and 6 months for men. See additional information by the CDC at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/women-and-their-partners.html>

### **Mosquito Bite Prevention**

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika. Travelers can protect themselves by taking the following measures to prevent mosquito bites:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

- If using both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first and then the repellent.
- Apply repellent containing **DEET** (preferred) concentration 30 to 35%, **picaridin**, **IR3535**, **oil of lemon eucalyptus**, **para-menthan-diol**, or **2-undecanone** to exposed skin. Follow application and reapplication instruction per manufacturer. Do not spray insect repellent on the skin under your clothing.
- Use permethrin (concentration 20% or greater) to clothing, bedding, and mosquito netting.
- Use air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If you are not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes inside your room/hotel, sleep under a mosquito bed net (if available).
- Help reduce the number of mosquitoes inside and outside hotel rooms by emptying standing water from containers such as flowerpots or buckets.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides an interactive search tool to help you select the insect repellent that is right for you at <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>.

### **Additional Information**

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE) developed [Zika: Resources at Your Fingertips](#) that includes an overview of Zika virus disease and quick links to numerous additional resources.

### **References:**

- ASPR TRACIE: Zika Resources at Your Fingertips. Retrieved 9/5/2017 from <https://asprtracie.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/aspr-tracie-zika-virus-disease-resources-at-your-fingertips.pdf>
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- CDC: Zika Virus – For Pregnant Women. Retrieved 9/4/2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/protect-yourself.html>
- CDC: Men and Zika. Retrieved 9/4/2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/men/index.html>
- CDC: MMWR 65(39); 1077-1081: Update: Interim guidance for preconception counseling and prevention of sexual transmission of Zika virus for persons with possible Zika virus exposure -United States, September 2016. Retrieved 9/4/2017 from [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6539e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6539e1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6539e1.htm?s_cid=mm6539e1_w)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Find the Insect Repellent that is Right for You. Retrieved 9/4/2017 from <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>