



# SHIP SAFETY BULLETIN

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**Subject:**

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Scope

The purpose of this SHIP SAFETY BULLETIN is to provide information and guidance, based on recommendations developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada concerning the current outbreak of the Zika virus.

### Background

Zika virus infection is caused by a virus which is primarily spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. It can also be transmitted by an infected pregnant woman to her developing baby and sexually transmitted by an infected man to his partner. Symptoms can include fever, headache, conjunctivitis (pink eye) and skin rash, along with joint and muscle pain. The illness is typically mild and lasts only a few days and the majority of those infected do not have symptoms. There is no vaccine or medication that protects against Zika virus infection. Most people who have Zika virus illness will have mild symptoms that resolve with simple supportive care.

Zika virus is occurring in many regions of the world. Local transmission of Zika virus was first reported in the Americas in 2015. Currently there is ongoing local transmission in many countries of South Asia, Western Pacific Islands, and South and Central America, including the Caribbean, and Mexico.

In addition, Brazil has reported a significant increase in the number of newborns with microcephaly (abnormally small head) and a number of countries have reported an increase in the number of cases of [Guillain-Barre Syndrome](#), a neurological disorder. Experts now agree that Zika virus infection causes both of these disorders.

**Keywords:**

1. Zika
2. Virus

**Questions concerning this Bulletin should be addressed to:**

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There have been travel-related cases of Zika virus reported in Canada in returned travellers from countries with ongoing Zika virus outbreaks. For the latest updates on countries affected by Zika virus, please visit [http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice?\\_ga=1.230001692.1284426785.1414674691](http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice?_ga=1.230001692.1284426785.1414674691))

## **Traveller Guidance**

**Travelers to affected areas** should protect themselves from mosquito bites at all times as Zika virus is transmitted by a mosquito that can bite in daylight and evening hours. Advice on how to prevent insect bites is available on the Public Health Agency of Canada's website at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/insect-bite>

**Pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy** should avoid travel to countries with ongoing Zika virus outbreaks.

- If travel cannot be avoided or postponed strict mosquito bite prevention measures should be followed due to the association between Zika virus infection and increased risk of serious health effects on their unborn baby.

## **Travellers returning from countries with ongoing Zika virus outbreaks**

- For pregnant women, if you develop symptoms that could be consistent with Zika virus infection, you should consult a health care provider.

## **For women planning a pregnancy**

- It is strongly recommended that you wait at least two months before trying to conceive to ensure that any possible Zika virus infection has cleared your body.

## **For male travellers**

- Zika virus can persist for an extended period of time in the semen of infected males, therefore:
  - It is strongly recommended that, if you have a pregnant partner, you should use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy.
  - It is strongly recommended that you and your partner wait to conceive for six months by using a condom.
  - It is recommended that you should consider using condoms with any partner for six months.

Most people who have Zika virus illness will have mild symptoms that resolve with simple supportive care. If you are pregnant, or you have underlying medical conditions, or you develop more serious symptoms that could be consistent with Zika virus infection, you should see a health care provider and tell them where you have been travelling or living.

## **Transportation Sector Guidance**

The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend disinsection of aircraft or other conveyances arriving in Canada, even those returning from areas where Zika virus is circulating:

- The risk of introduction and establishment of the mosquito vectors is very low due to current climatic conditions, so disinsection as a means of preventing sustained transmission in Canada is not required.
- There remains a very low risk that an infective mosquito transported to Canada via airplane or vessel could bite someone in transit or shortly after arrival - this has been a possibility for yellow fever, Dengue and Chikungunya in Canada for years (these diseases are transmitted by the same *Aedes* mosquito vectors as Zika virus). This has not been identified as a mode of transmission in Canada to date, so the risk of transmission of Zika by this means is similarly unlikely.
- Risk of transmission to a passenger on an aircraft (or vessel) represents an extremely small proportion of the total risk to a person that has spent any time in the affected region(s).
- Evidence suggests most cases of Zika virus (as well as yellow fever, dengue and chikungunya) are spread by human travel and not mosquito travel - targeting mosquitoes through disinsection is therefore not likely the most effective public health intervention.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is routinely engaged with major airports and sea ports to review their public health capacities, which includes general vector control. At this time, PHAC is not recommending any additional control measures in response to Zika virus.

This position is based on current available scientific information and is subject to review and change as new information becomes available.

## **Additional Sources of Information**

Public Health Agency of Canada has developed general information pages concerning Canada's response to Zika Virus and the disease itself.

[http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/zika-virus/index-eng.php?\\_ga=1.131421836.2076658363.1451406837](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/zika-virus/index-eng.php?_ga=1.131421836.2076658363.1451406837)

## **Contact information**

Questions or queries should be directed to Public Health Agency of Canada using the following email address: [tpp.ppv@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:tpp.ppv@phac-aspc.gc.ca)