



Questions and Answers: Zika and Sexual Transmission

Interim Guidelines for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of Zika Virus – United States, 2016
(http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6505e1er.htm?s_cid=mm6505e1er_w.htm)

Can Zika virus be spread through sex?

What we know:

- There is evidence that the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted by a man to his sex partners.
- In the two cases of likely sexual transmission, both men had symptoms.
- In one case, transmission occurred a few days before the man developed symptoms.
- The virus is present in semen longer than in blood.

What we do not know:

- We do not know how long the virus is present in semen in men who have had Zika.
- We do not know if infected men who never develop symptoms can have Zika virus in their semen.
- We do not know if infected men who never develop symptoms can transmit Zika virus through sex.
- We do not know if a woman can transmit Zika virus to her sex partners.

How long can Zika virus live in semen?

We do not know how long the Zika virus is present in semen. One report found the virus in semen at least two weeks after symptoms of infection began. No follow up testing was done to determine when the man no longer had Zika virus in his semen.

Can a female sex partner transmit the Zika virus to her sex partners?

At this time, there is no evidence that women can transmit Zika virus to their sex partners.

If a man traveled to or lives in an area with Zika, is it safe for him to have sex (vaginal, anal, and oral) with his pregnant partner?

There is evidence that Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a man to his sex partners. CDC recommends that men who have lived in or traveled to an area with Zika virus should abstain from sex or use condoms the right way every time for vaginal, anal, and oral (fellatio or mouth-to-penis) sex for the duration of the pregnancy. Additionally, the CDC recommends that pregnant women talk with their health care providers about their male partner's potential exposures to Zika virus and symptoms of Zika-like illness.

Men who live or are traveling in an area with active Zika transmission should also take steps to prevent mosquito bites.

A sexually active man lives in or has traveled to an area with Zika virus. How can he prevent spreading the Zika virus to his sex partners?

Men who live or are traveling in an area with active Zika virus transmission should take steps to prevent mosquito bites.

There is evidence that the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a man to his sex partners. Until we know more, the man might consider abstaining from sex or using condoms the right way every time for vaginal, anal, and oral sex (fellatio or mouth-to-penis). Condoms can also help prevent getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

If a man develops symptoms of Zika virus illness at any time during his travel or within two weeks after he returns, he should see his healthcare provider to see if he has Zika virus or another illness.

If a man's partner is pregnant, the couple should abstain from sex or use condoms the right way every time they have vaginal, anal, and oral sex for the duration of the partner's pregnancy.

A male traveled to or lives in an area with Zika virus. His female sex partner is trying to get pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant. How long do they need to wait before trying to get pregnant?

We do not know how long the Zika virus is present in semen for men who have been infected with Zika virus. One report found the virus in semen at least two weeks after illness. No follow up testing was done to determine when the man no longer had Zika virus in his semen. At this time, we do not know how long the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a male partner. If someone is concerned they should talk to their healthcare provider about their male sex partner's travel history, including how long he stayed, and whether or not he took steps to prevent getting mosquito bites.

If the male sex partner traveled to an area with Zika virus, his partner is pregnant and they had sex (vaginal, anal or oral) without a condom since he returned, is it possible that he could transmit the Zika virus to her?

There is evidence that Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a man to his sex partners. If a woman is concerned that her male partner may have or had Zika, she should talk to her healthcare provider about her male sex partner's travel history, including how long he stayed, whether or not he took steps to prevent getting mosquito bites, and that she had sex without a condom since his return.

Should sexually active people be concerned about getting Zika virus from their male sex partners? What if their travel history is unknown?

Only people whose male sex partners have traveled to or live in an area with active Zika transmission need to be concerned about potential sexual transmission of Zika virus. If someone doesn't know their sex partner's travel history, they should use condoms the right way every time they have vaginal, anal, or oral (fellatio or mouth-to-penis) sex. Condoms can also help prevent getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases

A man traveled to an area with Zika before there were known cases of Zika. Is it possible that he can transmit the Zika virus to his sex partners?

Based on what we know today, traveling to or living in areas without active transmission does not pose a risk of getting infected with Zika. However, if someone is concerned for any reason, they can abstain from sex or use condoms the right way every time they have vaginal, anal, or oral (fellatio or mouth-to-penis) sex. Condoms can also help prevent getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Are condoms and abstinence equally effective for preventing sexual transmission of Zika?

Not having sex is the best way to be sure that someone does not get sexually transmitted Zika virus. If an individual is sexually active, using condoms the right way every time they have vaginal, anal, or oral (fellatio or mouth-to-penis) sex can reduce the chance that they can get Zika virus from sex. Condoms can also help prevent getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Can a man have his semen tested for Zika virus?

There are tests to detect Zika virus in semen but they are not widely available. Further, we have a limited understanding of how to interpret the results of such tests, so testing of semen is not recommended. As we learn more, these tests may become more helpful to determine the risk of sexual transmission of Zika.

Are there tests available to determine the risk of sexual transmission of Zika?

No. Zika virus testing has been recommended to establish a diagnosis of infection. Testing blood or semen is not recommended to determine the risk of sexual transmission of Zika virus.

Since Zika virus can remain in semen longer than blood, someone might have a negative blood test but a positive semen test. We have a limited understanding of how to interpret the results of tests on semen or the frequency of testing needed. Studies are underway to better understand the performance of these tests and how best to interpret the results. As additional information becomes available it will be provided.

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National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid>)

Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/index.html>)