



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Ronstadt Insurance, Inc.

The Zika virus has garnered much attention since 2015, when the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the Zika virus outbreak in Brazil.

## PUBLIC HEALTH: ZIKA VIRUS

Named after the Ugandan forest where it was first discovered, the Zika virus is a mosquito-transmitted infection. Unlike other mosquito-transmitted infections, there is no vaccination to prevent or treat the Zika virus currently. Though becoming severely ill from the Zika virus is rare, it is important to know the facts and how to protect yourself from the virus.

### Risk Factors

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where the Zika virus is found is at risk for infection. Because health experts are investigating the potential link between the Zika virus and a spike in the number of infants being born with microcephaly (a neurological condition in which an infant's brain does not grow properly and results in an abnormally small head size), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued travel alerts advising women who are pregnant or who could be pregnant against traveling.

The list of affected countries is ever-changing, but the following link provides the most updated information: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>

### Symptoms

Approximately 1 out of every 5 individuals infected with the Zika virus will exhibit symptoms. These symptoms are typically mild in nature and last between a few days to a week. The most common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint pain
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Muscle pain
- Headache

There is a possibility that the Zika virus is linked to microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome, an extremely rare condition in which a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. However, experts have yet to prove a definitive correlation between these two conditions and the Zika virus.

### Prevention

The best way to avoid infection is to avoid traveling to areas that are experiencing Zika virus outbreaks. Also, the following is a list of steps you can take to help control mosquitoes and decrease your chances of being bitten:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when going into mosquito-infested areas, especially during the day, when the mosquito that carries the Zika virus is most active.
- Mosquitoes breed and multiply in standing water. Eliminate standing water in your yard. This includes unclogging roof gutters, changing the water in birdbaths and emptying unused swimming pools.
- Use insect repellents that are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and be sure to follow the label's instructions. If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen **before** applying insect repellent. **Do not** use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months old.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items. **Do not** apply permethrin directly to the skin.
- Mosquitoes can live indoors and will bite at any time, day or night. Use air conditioning to cool off your home and be sure that screens are on all windows and doors, especially if you often leave them open.

Global health experts are actively studying the Zika virus and are hopeful that medical breakthroughs will be made soon that can help prevent and treat this infection.

