

# Travel alert for staff and students: ZIKA VIRUS

## Advice for travelling to countries with the Zika virus

This page provides information for UC's staff and students on the Zika virus.

**Please note: any travel by staff or students who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant to a region where the Zika virus is present should not be undertaken.**

### Key facts

- Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes.
- People with Zika virus disease usually have a mild fever, skin rash (exanthema) and conjunctivitis. These symptoms normally last for 2-7 days.
- There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available.
- The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites.
- The virus is known to circulate in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

### What is it?

The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne disease that is closely related to dengue and can be transmitted to people if they are bitten. It can typically take up to 3 to 12 days for symptoms to appear. Many people experience no symptoms, while others may experience a fever, weakness/lack of energy, a rash, severe headache, joint and muscle pain, or conjunctivitis (inflammation of the eyes).

There is no cure for Zika virus, which is treated by making the patient more comfortable as they recover. The disease goes away on its own in about a week.

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika, so it is important to prevent mosquito bites.

There is some evidence to suggest that Zika virus may cause neurological problems, and birth defects in the babies of women who were infected during pregnancy.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the situation a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

### Countries affected

Areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are difficult to determine and likely to change over time. This list covers the key countries of concern:

Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guadelope, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Samoa, Suriname, Tonga, US Virgin Islands, Venezuela

Further cases of Zika virus may be reported in the future from other countries, especially those nearby to countries with ongoing Zika transmission (where there are suitable species of mosquitoes that can transmit the virus).



## Travel advice

### **For staff or students who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and are considering travel to a Zika Virus affected region:**

Official advice from authorities is that all travel to affected areas should be postponed if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. The University is highly recommending that travel for any staff member who is or could be pregnant to any region where the Zika virus is present not be undertaken.

Please seek medical advice if you are considering travel to an affected region.

### **For all other staff/students travelling to a Zika virus affected region, please follow these instructions:**

- Seek medical advice before you travel
- Prevent infection by preventing mosquito bites by taking the following measures when travelling to areas wherever mosquito borne diseases are present during the daytime as well as night time:
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks (use insecticide/permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, tents and bed net))
  - Use an effective insect repellent that contains DEET, Picaridin, PMD, or IR3535.
  - Ensure windows are covered with fly-wire.
  - Use "knock-down" insect spray to kill mosquitoes in your room.
- Choose air conditioned accommodation if possible.

### **Ensure all travel is registered with ISOS and DFAT Smartraveller as per UC's International Travel Procedures.**

## Returning to Australia

If you have returned from travel to areas affected by Zika and become unwell or have been unwell, particularly if you are pregnant, you should see a doctor and mention your overseas travel.

### **For more information:**

- Please seek medical advice from a registered health professional.
- DFAT's Smartraveller: [http://smartraveller.gov.au/bulletins/zika\\_virus](http://smartraveller.gov.au/bulletins/zika_virus)
- See the International SOS Zika website - use your membership number to log in at <https://pandemic.internationalsos.com/zika>
- About preventing mosquito bites: see the Travel Advice articles "[Preventing Mosquito Bites](#)" and "Using Insect Repellents Safely" on the International SOS Country Guides
- Contact any International SOS assistance centre.  
Sydney Assistance Centre 24/7: +61 (0)2 9372 2468 – [www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com)