

Frequently Asked Questions Zika Virus

What are the Zika virus infection symptoms?

The disease is usually mild with symptoms lasting from days to a week. According to the Puerto Rico Department of Health, in general, the symptoms begin 3-7 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Common symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain or pink eye. Other symptoms include muscle pain, headache, pain behind the eyes and vomiting. Only blood tests can confirm if it is indeed the Zika virus. According to the CDC, recently, the Ministry of Health in Brazil has raised concerns about a possible association between the Zika virus outbreak and increased numbers of babies born with birth defects. For this reason, pregnant women should take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Serious illness is not common. Deaths from the disease are rare.

What can travelers do to prevent Zika virus infection?

There is currently no vaccine or medicine to prevent Zika virus infection. Travelers can protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites.

How to prevent mosquito bites:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent as directed.
- Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection. Use products with the following active ingredients:
 - [DEET](#) (Products containing DEET include Off!, Cutter, Sawyer, and Ultrathon)
 - **Picaridin** (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin products containing picaridin include Cutter Advanced, Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus, and Autan (outside the US))
 - **Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)** or **PMD** (Products containing OLE include Repel and Off! Botanicals)
 - **IR3535** (Products containing IR3535 include Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Expedition and SkinSmart)
- Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.
- Additional information from the CDC, The Caribbean Public Health Agency, in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organization and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), state that travelers should apply insect repellent, sleep in air-conditioned rooms and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, particularly at dusk.

Is it safe for meeting attendees/tourists to travel to Puerto Rico?

- The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia has issued a travel [alert](#) to Puerto Rico, advising people traveling to Puerto Rico to practice enhanced precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites to reduce their risk of infection with Zika virus and other mosquito-borne viruses, such as dengue and chikungunya. Special Interim recommendations have been identified by the CDC for pregnant women – please see below.

Is it safe for pregnant women to travel to Puerto Rico?

- The CDC has provided the following interim recommendations for pregnant travelers.

[\(Interim Recommendations\)](#)

Zika virus can be spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called [microcephaly](#) and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and these outcomes is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:

- Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
 - Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
 - If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant:
 - Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
 - Strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.

Specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. As more information becomes available, this travel notice will be updated. Please check back frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations. Travelers can also consult [PAHO](#) for a list of Latin American countries with ongoing transmission.

- [The Puerto Rico Department of Health](#) has issued a statement assuring the public it has taken all the necessary measures to keep monitoring the situation and prevent an outbreak.
- As always, all emergency services are open and prepared to deal with any situation or emergency including hospital facilities, fire department, police and ambulances.

- Medical supplies and treatment is readily available in Puerto Rico for any more confirmed cases that may arise.

Is Puerto Rico still accessible for meeting attendees/tourists?

- Yes, Puerto Rico's many attractions, resort areas and tourist services have not been affected by this situation. Services relevant to tourists are available including:
 - Taxis
 - Casinos
 - National Parks
 - Airport Staff and Maintenance
 - Tour Guides
 - Municipal Services
 - Tourist Information Centers
 - Emergency Services (hospital facilities, fire department, police, EMT)
- Meet Puerto Rico is constantly monitoring the situation and in constant communication with the Department of Health.

Is the current situation a concern for travelers to Puerto Rico?

- The Government of Puerto Rico, The Department of Health, The Puerto Rico Tourism Company and our industry partners are taking all necessary measures to enable travelers to enjoy their visit to our island.
- The CDC has issued a [travel alert](#) advising people traveling to Puerto Rico to take usual precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites to reduce their risk of infection with Zika virus and other mosquito-borne viruses, such as dengue and chikungunya. Special recommendations for pregnant travelers are also listed.
- The Puerto Rico Department of Health, <http://www.salud.gov.pr/Pages/Home.aspx>, has provided updates on the current situation and helpful tips. This site is in Spanish.
- All ports, airports and taxi services continue to run as usual. All casinos, visitor centers and beaches and parks will remain open for visitors.
- We urge travelers to keep informed and check updated information on the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- The Puerto Rico Tourism Company will post any alerts regarding travel to Puerto Rico on its website www.seepuertorico.com.

What is the potential impact on meetings as a result of this issue?

- There has currently been no impact on tourism meetings to Puerto Rico. However, Meet Puerto Rico will remain in constant communication with our tourism partners and the Puerto Rico Department of Health. We will continue to monitor any travel advisories issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and work with our partners to take appropriate measures to minimize the potential effects of Zika virus on travel to the island.

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