

2016 TRAVEL WARNING – ZIKA VIRUS!

The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Centres for Disease Control in the USA are warning pregnant women to exercise caution when traveling to **Mexico, Puerto Rico**, the Caribbean countries of **Haiti and Martinique**, the Central American countries of **El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama**, and the South American countries of **Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Paraguay, Suriname and Venezuela**.

Mosquitoes transmit Zika Virus during daylight and evening hours. If bitten by an infected mosquito, you may be at risk of your baby developing a serious birth defect called microcephaly.

Should you have made plans to visit any of these countries during your pregnancy, it is advised by both agencies that you postpone travel to any areas where Zika virus transmission is currently occurring.

If your trip cannot be avoided, please ensure you protect yourself from mosquito bites by;

- Covering exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET, Icaridin (Picaridin) or botanicals such as oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always use as directed.
 - Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use DEET and Icaridin (which has limited availability in Canada)
 - Most repellents, including DEET, can be used on children aged >6 months.
- Use [permethrin-treated](#) clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). Please note that permethrin is not available in Canada but travel health clinics can advise you how to purchase permethrin and pre-treated gear before or during your trip.
- Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.

For more information on this topic, go to: <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/preventing-mosquito-and-tick-bites>

And: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/insect-bite>

There is no vaccine or treatment for the Zika Virus. The symptoms are mild and may include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (similar to pink eye), lasting from several days to 1 week. However, an estimated 80% of individuals with Zika have no symptoms.

If you have travelled to one of the affected areas and have developed more than two of the symptoms above during or within two weeks of your travel, please contact your midwife. Zika cannot be transmitted person to person, so you cannot be infected by another person who has travelled to these areas.

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