

Mosquito and Other Vector-Borne Disease

International travel is often a fun, rewarding, and mind-opening experience. It is a time to experience other cultures, to study or perfect a language, and to learn more about the world in general. While travel offers many rewards, it is also important to understand and prepare for the health and safety risks present in traveling internationally.

One such potential health risk is vector-borne disease. These are infections that can be transmitted by invertebrates, such as mosquitos and ticks. One such disease is the [Zika virus](#) (see information below); however, there are many additional mosquito-borne diseases, such as [Chikungunya](#), [Dengue](#), [Malaria](#) and [Yellow Fever](#) that can have serious health consequences. It is important to know the risks that mosquitos and other insect bites can pose to you based on your travel destination and to protect yourself accordingly.

Recommendations:

- (1) Have an **international travel health consultation** before traveling to get up to date travel health advice and learn about the ways you can protect yourself from illness.

UNM Student Health & Counseling can help. See <http://shac.unm.edu/medical-services/travel-health.html>

- (2) Avoid **bug bites**.

Repellent—

For protection against ticks and mosquitoes it is important to select a repellent that contains 20% or more **DEET**. Products containing DEET include Off!, Cutter, Sawyer, and Ultrathon.

Non-pharmaceutical protection—

To prevent bites, cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats. Sleep in cool and/or screened rooms and use bed nets if you will be sleeping near or in the outdoors. Avoid hiking through brush and stay on hiking trails to avoid ticks.

Check the CDC Website on more ideas on how you can protect yourself from mosquito and other vector-borne infections: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites>

- (3) Check travel resources:

University of New Mexico Student Health and Counseling International Travel Health Clinic:
<http://shac.unm.edu/medical-services/travel-health.html>

The Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Traveler's Health website:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/Travel>

(4) You may also consider going to your primary care provider to get a regular check-up, especially if you have a medical condition. Other check-ups you may consider prior to travel are to your eye doctor or dentist.

(5) Schedule a **post-travel health visit**

If you have travelled and feel unwell, please schedule to see your primary care provider for a health check-up and tell them about where you have traveled and what dates you travelled. This is particularly important if you return with a ***fever, rash, respiratory symptoms, or gastrointestinal complaints***. SHAC providers also see returning UNM student travelers.

Special Update on Zika virus

ZIKA

Zika is a mosquito-borne infection that has been making headlines due to its prolific spread in several countries and territories and the possible impact this infection may have on a growing fetus. In addition to several other countries, Zika has been locally transmitted in the United States in Miami-Dade County Florida.

How is Zika Spread?

- Zika is a virus that is spread to people:
 - Through the bite of an infected mosquito
 - Through sex from a person who is infected to his or her partner
 - And, in pregnancy from a pregnant woman to her fetus
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have advised *pregnant women or women trying to become pregnant to postpone traveling to areas with current Zika virus transmission, including Miami-Dade County Florida.*

What are the symptoms of Zika?

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint pain, muscle pain, and/or headaches
- Red eyes
- Most people infected with Zika won't have any symptoms or will only have mild symptoms

What should I do to prevent Zika?

- Avoid non-essential travel to Zika infected areas
- Individuals traveling to Zika infected areas should consistently prevent mosquito bites <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/mosqprevinus.pdf>
 - Ex., treat clothing and gear with permethrin, sleep under mosquito bed nets, use EPA-registered insect repellents, etc.
- Women and men who live or have traveled to areas with active Zika virus should consistently and correctly use condoms or other barrier methods to prevent infection during sex
- Women who are pregnant and suspect that they or their partners have been exposed to Zika virus should speak with their primary care provider or obstetrician as soon as possible.

How is Zika Treated?

- There is no medicine that treats Zika, so it is important to treat the symptoms by getting plenty of rest and staying hydrated. Always check with your medical provider before taking medication and avoid aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Acetaminophen helps reduce fever and pain, but only take this medication as directed.

World Map of Areas With Risk of Zika: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/files/zika-areas-of-risk.pdf>