

# sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

## wildfact

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which spreads Zika, also may carry Dengue, Yellow Fever, Chikungunya, and the West Nile virus.

## I heard the Zika virus can spread sexually – is that true?

While Zika is all over the news right now, your risk here in Tucson is very low - but may increase depending on your travel plans. The virus is primarily spread to people from mosquito bites, but also may be sexually transmitted by men, through contact with infected semen. At present, it does not appear that women can spread the virus to their sex partners.

Symptoms of Zika are usually mild and include a rash, fever, mild headaches, pink eye, joint pain, and general malaise, which may last several days to a week. It's estimated that 4 out of 5 people who become infected never have symptoms.

One of the most troubling aspects of the disease is its association with microcephaly, a birth defect in which the fetus has a small head and incomplete brain development. In countries where the virus and the mosquitoes that spread it are present, women may be at greater risk of giving birth to children with microcephaly if they are infected while they are

pregnant. There is still much to learn about the link between Zika and microcephaly, but the connection between the two appears to be getting stronger.

As a result of its association with microcephaly, men who live in or have traveled to areas affected by Zika should use condoms during sex or abstain from sexual activity with their pregnant sex partners to lower the risk of transmitting the virus.

If you have travel planned to Central or South America or the Caribbean, be sure to review the CDC travel alerts before you go. At present, the CDC recommends that pregnant women should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. For individuals who are already in these areas or have no choice but to travel, preventing mosquito bites is the best way to avoid the Zika virus, since no vaccine is available at this time.

For more information, go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).



[www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu)

Have a question? Email it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)



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