ZIKA VIRUS AND THE RIO 2016 PARALYMPIC GAMES
PNZ INFORMATION FOR ATHLETES AND SUPPORT STAFF
Must Know Information – 8 August 2016

- Zika virus is transmitted to people through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. Zika virus can also be transmitted from person to person by sexual activity through semen.
- Brazil is currently undergoing an outbreak of Zika virus.
- Zika virus has also been found in the Pacific Islands including Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa, Fiji, the Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea.
- Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have concluded, after careful review of existing evidence, that Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly (small head/brain) and other severe fetal brain defects.
- There is currently no vaccination or specific treatment for Zika virus infections.
- Avoiding mosquito bites is the key action and PNZ is providing specific guidance on this.
- Most people infected with Zika virus don’t develop any symptoms, but those that do may become unwell 3-12 days after being bitten.
- The most common symptoms include sore joints, mild fever, headache, red eyes, rash and muscle aches.
- Most symptoms resolve within a week.
- The Rio 2016 Organising Committee is taking steps to minimise risk to visitors to Rio of being bitten by mosquitoes.
- Pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy in the short term should where possible avoid travelling to Zika affected areas, including Rio.
- Male or female team members who have pregnant partners, or who are planning pregnancy in the six months following the Rio Paralympics should read the detailed information contained in this document and consult with their Medical Practitioners before travelling to Rio.
Specific questions or concerns should be directed to travel medicine specialists, General Practitioners or the Paralympics New Zealand (PNZ) Medical Lead in advance of any planned travel.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Zika Virus?

- Zika virus is transmitted from infected person to mosquito to person. When the *Aedes* mosquitoes bites an infected person, the mosquito becomes infected and can then pass on the virus when they bite another person. The virus can also be sexually transmitted through semen.
- *Aedes* mosquitoes are common in Brazil, where a Zika Virus outbreak is currently occurring.
- Zika Virus is similar to other infections that you may have heard of before, including dengue, yellow fever and West Nile viruses.
- The first reported cases of Zika virus infection in Brazil were reported in May 2015. It was first identified in Uganda in 1947, and has since been reported in other parts of Africa, southern Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. The virus may also be in countries other than those reported and not yet be detected.

What happens if I get Zika Virus?

- Even if you are bitten by a mosquito infected with Zika virus, most people don’t develop any symptoms, but you may become unwell 3-12 days later.
- Athletes and Staff infected with Zika virus may become unwell both in Rio de Janeiro, or up to 12 days after they have left the country, depending on when they were infected.
- In those who develop symptoms, the most common include sore joints, mild fever, headache, red eyes, rash and muscle aches.
- Most symptoms resolve within 1 week.
- Anyone who develops symptoms either in Brazil or on return to New Zealand should immediately consult their health team or their medical practitioner.
- After careful review of existing evidence, scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have concluded that
Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly (small head/brain) and other severe fetal brain defects.

- There is also a concern that a very small number of individuals who are infected with Zika Virus, may subsequently develop a neurological condition known as Guillain Barré syndrome.
- There is no evidence that Zika virus will cause congenital infection in pregnancies conceived after the resolution of maternal Zika viremia (i.e. after the virus is no longer found in the body).

**Can the ZIKA Virus be prevented or treated?**

- There is currently no vaccination or specific treatment for Zika virus infections.
- Treatment is based around helping the symptoms.
- The avoidance of mosquito bites must be prioritised.
- Due to potentially elevated risk of complications, Athletes and Staff who may have Sickle Cell Trait should consult a medical practitioner in advance of travel.
- While September is not peak mosquito season, it will be assumed that mosquitoes (and by implication the Zika virus) will be present within the village, transport routes and venues (the local organising committee is working to minimise this risk).

**How do I reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes?**

- Rio 2016 and the city of Rio are taking steps to minimise the presence of mosquitoes including:
  - City-wide education and engagement strategies.
  - The removal of stagnant water to prevent breeding of mosquitoes.
  - Spraying of Olympic venues with insecticide immediately prior to the start of the Olympics and Paralympics.
- PNZ recommends the following strategies to minimise the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes during the Rio Paralympic Games:
  - The use of insect repellent at all times during the day.
    - A DEET containing repellent will be provided to each team member by PNZ but if there are specific requirements, individual supplies should also be taken.
When using sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first.
Wear the light coloured long sleeve shirts and trousers provided as part of the uniform when practical and able.
Use the AC that will be available in all bedrooms to reduce mosquito presence.
Use the electronic mosquito repellent that will be present in each bedroom.
Use the mosquito nets provided by PNZ (while the Aedes mosquito is a day biter, “naps” during the day are a common occurrence at the Olympics).

- Zika virus has been detected in semen, and cases of sexual transmission have been reported. See below for recommendations on the prevention of sexual transmission.

What if my partner or I intend to get pregnant before, during or after the Rio Olympics?

Decisions couples make regarding pregnancy and pregnancy timing are personal and complex. As a result, discussions regarding specific situations should be individualised between an appropriate Medical Practitioner and the Athlete or Staff member.

PNZ recommend that male or female athletes and staff intending for either themselves or partner to become pregnant or be pregnant during or, in the six months after the Games period should consult their medical practitioner or obstetrician in advance of travel. See below for options for testing in selected cases.

- Current NZ Ministry of Health Guidelines (27 July 2016) recommend:
  o Women who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant in the near term consider delaying travel to areas with Zika virus present.
  o Women who have travelled to an affected country (eg. Brazil) without their partner use appropriate contraception for 8 (eight) weeks to avoid pregnancy.
  o All men who have travelled to a Zika-affected area and have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity (oral, vaginal, and anal) or use condoms for the
duration of the pregnancy, whether they have symptoms or not.

- All men who have travelled to a Zika-affected area and have a partner who is at risk of becoming pregnant should abstain from sexual activity (oral, vaginal, and anal) or use condoms, whether they have symptoms or not, for at least 6 (six) months after leaving a Zika-affected area.

**Note One:**
The guidelines above apply even if you have no symptoms. Only one in five people who get the Zika infection will show symptoms, so it's possible to have the infection and not know it.

**Note Two:**
At this time, there is only limited evidence available about how long you should abstain from sex or use condoms and international advice varies. Preliminary research has found Zika virus present in semen at least two months after an infection develops. However, how infectious the virus remains and how long it can possibly stay in the semen is not known.

The above guidelines are the NZ Ministry of Health (see: [http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/zika-virus](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/zika-virus)) recommendations, however other international organisations with advice on sexual transmission of the Zika virus include:


**Can I be tested for Zika Virus if I am pregnant, or before I plan to conceive?**

- Even if asymptomatic, women pregnant while in the affected areas should be tested (blood and/or urine) in the first weeks after they have left affected areas.
Other ‘at-risk’ individuals can be tested soon upon return to NZ. These include (a) a pregnant partner in NZ, (b) intending to attempt to conceive soon after return from Rio, or (c) unable or unwilling to use barrier contraception for the period recommended. This needs to be discussed and arranged with the PNZ Medical Lead in advance.

Women do not need to be tested if they have used the appropriate contraception for 8 weeks after returning from the affected areas before getting pregnant.

Individualised assessment advice can be provided by medical doctors.

Is the Rio 2016 Organising Committee doing anything to reduce risk of infection to visitors to Rio?

- Rio 2016 has a plan in place for the Games venues in the lead-up to and at Games time, which will see venues inspected on a daily basis in order to ensure that any puddles of stagnant water - where the mosquitos breed - are removed, therefore minimising the risk of athletes and visitors coming into contact with mosquitos.
- Rio 2016 will also continue to follow the virus prevention and control measures provided by the authorities, and will provide the relevant guidance to Games athletes and visitors.
- It is also important to note that the Rio 2016 Games will take place during the winter months of September, when the drier, cooler climate significantly reduces the presence of mosquitos and therefore the risk of infection.
- In general, the Brazilian authorities are also taking significant steps to deal with Zika, as they have recently announced that over 200,000 members of the armed forces and health workers will be engaged across the country, going from house to house to distribute leaflets and dispense advice about how to combat the mosquitos and the virus.

Additional Information

- Zika virus is currently reported in the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in particular). Athletes travelling to the islands, before or
after the Rio Paralympics, should consider preventive approaches as per the above guidance.

- Athletes and staff will be provided with up-to-date information on a regular basis in the lead up to Rio 2016.

**NOTE:** Information contained in this update is based upon available information at the date of publication. Due to a lack of research on this topic, there remains uncertainty around specific risks and recommendations, particularly around the risk of microcephaly and sexual transmission. This information sheet will be updated as further detail becomes available, but should be correlated against information available on international websites listed below.

**Useful Sources of Information**

World Health Organisation:
http://www.who.int/en/

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control:

NZ Ministry of Health:
http://www.health.govt.nz/

NZ Safe Travel Advisory:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6502e1.htm (pregnancy guidelines)

Travel Information:
https://worldwise.co.nz

PNZ acknowledge the NZ Olympic Committee for providing the basis of the above information.