

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS TESTING



## For Pregnant Women Exposed to Zika Who Have Symptoms

If you or your sex partner live in or recently traveled to an area with risk of Zika, you may have been exposed to Zika. If you have red eyes, fever, joint pain, or rash, there is a chance that these symptoms may be caused by Zika. Testing for Zika is recommended as soon as possible within 12 weeks of when your symptoms began. You may have questions about Zika and how to find out if you've been infected. Keep reading to learn more.

### Zika testing is complex

- **You will need a combination of Zika tests:**  
Finding out if you have Zika can require having up to three different kinds of tests. You may wait different amounts of time for the results of each test to come back.
- **Understanding test results can be challenging:**  
Zika is similar to other viruses. Zika tests can sometimes detect other viruses. Sometimes even after several tests, we may not know which type of virus you were infected with. Each test result is important because it may help your doctor or other healthcare provider decide how best to care for you during your pregnancy.
- **Previous exposure to Zika could affect your current test results:**  
One of the tests looks for Zika antibodies, which the body makes to fight a Zika infection. We know that these antibodies can stay in the body for several months after a person is infected. If you previously lived in or frequently traveled to an area where local mosquitoes spread Zika, you may have been infected before pregnancy. This means you may have already developed antibodies against Zika before you became pregnant. If you were infected with Zika before pregnancy, Zika antibodies may still be in your body and there would be no way to tell if you were infected in the past or if you were infected more recently during your current pregnancy. This means that these results would not tell us if your pregnancy is at risk from Zika infection.



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

## Testing Process

Testing is recommended for pregnant women with symptoms who may have recently been exposed to Zika. You may have been exposed if you lived in or traveled to an area with risk of Zika or had sex without a condom with a partner who lived in or traveled to an area with risk of Zika. Because you may have been exposed to Zika within the last 12 weeks, your doctor may order the following tests to look for evidence of Zika infection.

### Step One

Your doctor or other provider will start by ordering two tests:

1. The first test looks for Zika genetic material, called RNA, which can be in blood and urine.
2. The second test looks for Zika antibodies.

If you test positive for Zika RNA, regardless of the test results for Zika antibodies, it means that you most likely have recently been infected with Zika.

If you test negative for Zika RNA and your antibody test is positive, more testing is needed. The antibody test can sometimes show results that are positive even when a person isn't actually infected. For example, the test might find antibodies to a similar mosquito-borne infection, such as dengue, which is why additional tests are needed.

If you test negative for Zika RNA and your antibody test is negative, it means there is no evidence you were recently infected with Zika.

### Step Two

If you tested negative for Zika RNA and your antibody test is positive, the third test that is needed is a separate test to confirm the type of antibodies. This test takes the longest for results. Your doctor or other healthcare provider will work with your state or local health department or the commercial laboratory to interpret your test results.

At any time during the testing process, if your doctor doesn't have a sample of your blood or urine, you may have to provide another sample.

## Testing Results

### Positive test results

Testing positive for Zika during pregnancy lets your doctor or other healthcare provider know to watch your pregnancy more closely. This means you might have more ultrasounds or other tests to check the growth and development of your fetus and check for Zika infection.

### Not clearly positive or negative test results

Sometimes, the test results aren't clearly positive or negative. If this happens, your doctor or other healthcare provider may choose to follow the CDC recommendations for a positive test result, meaning he or she might do more ultrasounds or other tests to monitor the pregnancy.

### Negative test results

Your doctor or other healthcare provider may check the growth and development of your fetus during an ultrasound and check for any signs of Zika virus infection. If there are no signs of Zika infection, you will get routine prenatal care, which is what CDC recommends. If your doctor or other healthcare provider sees signs of Zika infection during an ultrasound, you may need additional tests.

