

***FACT vs. FICTION: 5 ZIKA MYTHS EXPOSED***

**Zika Myth #1:** *Zika mosquitoes are all over the United States.*

**Zika Mythbuster #1:**  NO, MOSQUITOES THAT SPREAD THE ZIKA VIRUS ARE HORRIBLE TRAVELERS AND THEY DO NOT LIKE THE COLD.

The Aedes mosquito is a weak flyer; it cannot fly more than 1312 feet. It cannot travel from an infected region in Latin America or the Caribbean, to the United States. However, it may be possible for the mosquito to be transported from one place to another accidentally and introduce Zika virus to new areas.

Areas at risk for Zika virus in the United States are mainly regions that are tropical or sub-tropical regions. There are only a few parts of the southern U.S. where Zika carrying mosquito populations exist in numbers high enough to support local transmission. Although no locally acquired cases have been reported, common sense measures to avoid getting bitten should be followed.

**Zika Myth #2:** *Zika mosquitoes are infecting people in the United States.*

**Zika Mythbuster #2:** NO, MOSQUITOES THAT SPREAD THE ZIKA VIRUS HAVE NOT BITTEN PEOPLE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES.

As of April 13, 2016 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that there have been 358 cases of travel-associated Zika, but none that have been locally acquired.

People who are exhibiting symptoms in the United States may have traveled to a “hot spot” region and bitten by an infected mosquito. It is possible for Zika to be transmitted sexually, through blood transfusions, or laboratory exposure. According to the CDC, people are still at risk of sexual transmission of Zika from a male partner who has been in areas where Zika is present.

**Zika Myth #3:** *Zika mosquitoes are everywhere.*

**Zika Mythbuster #3:** NO, MOSQUITOS THAT SPREAD THE ZIKA VIRUS ARE “AFRAID” OF HEIGHTS.

The mosquitoes that spread Zika usually do not live at elevations above 6,500 feet (2,000 meters). Travelers who plan to be only in areas above this elevation are at a very low risk of getting Zika from a mosquito. For example, due to its high elevation, Bogota, Colombia is not a breeding ground for the Aedes mosquito.

**Zika Myth #4:** *Zika mosquitoes only bite women.*

**Zika Mythbuster #4:** NO, MOSQUITOES THAT SPREAD THE ZIKA VIRUS ARE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

Both men and women are targets for the Aedes mosquito and can be bitten. If traveling to a country where Zika is prevalent, take preventive protection measures. Males can carry the virus after being bitten. As a precautionary measure, pregnant women in any trimester, and women trying to become pregnant, should avoid travel to Zika hot spots.

**Zika Myth #5:** *There is no way to avoid getting Zika.*

**Zika Mythbuster #5:** NO, there are ways to avoid the mosquitoes that carry Zika and to avoid getting bit.

Use mosquito nets at night and even when resting during the day when the Aedes mosquitoes are the most active. Use mesh screens on doors and windows whenever possible. Drain standing water in any containers or areas that is can accumulate like puddles or old tires.

To further avoid being bitten, wear long sleeves, long pants or skirts. Cover as much of your body as possible. Use insect repellant that contains DEET (diethyltoluamide) or IR 3535 or Icaridin, the most common biologically active ingredients in insect repellents. Repellents must be used in strict accordance with the label instructions.

Malteser International Americas has been on the ground, shedding light and bringing relief to indigenous people and Afro-Colombians in northern Colombia affected by armed conflict and internal displacement since 2014, especially in the departments of Magdalena and La Guajira. As a result of the conflict, the Colombians in the region suffer from malnourishment and lack food security. To address these issues, and to help people live healthier lives with dignity, Malteser International Americas expanded its relief and development work in Colombia late last year.

To learn more about the organization’s Zika prevention efforts, please visit: www.orderofmaltarelief.org.

**About Malteser International Americas:**

[Malteser International Americas](http://www.orderofmaltarelief.org) is a global humanitarian organization with a mission of supporting the vulnerable and marginalized so that they may live a healthy life with dignity. Through our U.S. headquarters, Malteser International Americas provides immediate disaster response and preparedness as well as vital healthcare and nutrition to vulnerable people in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are part of Malteser International, the humanitarian relief agency of the Order of Malta. With more than 100 projects annually in some 25 countries worldwide, we provide emergency relief after disasters and support recovery efforts, bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and sustainable development. For nearly 60 years, we have been standing by those affected by poverty, disease, conflict and disaster.