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# Study: Millennials Are Divided Over Travel to 'Zika Countries'

*Concern about future pregnancies is keeping some millennials from traveling.*

JUDY KOUTSKY

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Millennials are generally thought to be more willing to take chances, especially when it comes to travel. But a new study shows that fear of Zika is a growing concern—even for 18 to 34-year-olds. According to research from [WebMD](#), 42 percent of 2,714 [respondents surveyed](#) now have greater concern about mosquito-borne diseases than in the past few years. This is hardly a surprise, given Zika's prevalence in the news as of late.

What is surprising, however, is that 50 percent of millennials said they worry about getting an illness that doesn't necessarily affect their current state save for the side effects. At present, the [World](#)

**Health Organization** (WHO) advises pregnant women not to travel to areas with ongoing Zika virus outbreaks. But what if you're not pregnant now, yet of childbearing age and planning to get pregnant in the future? For Natalie Fleysher, a 33-year-old in White Plains, New York who is getting married in December, Zika was very much on her mind when picking a **honeymoon locale**. "I'm not pregnant now, but I am planning on it for next year, and the uncertainty of how long the virus can stay in your body and how it gets transmitted is what is keeping us from traveling there," said Fleysher, whose first choice for a honeymoon destination was Costa Rica. "I don't want to take that risk if I don't have to, because my future children's wellness is more important to me than a honeymoon destination." But are these fears unfounded? Based on the current available evidence, the **Centers for Disease Control** notes that the Zika virus infection in a woman who is not pregnant would not pose a risk for birth defects in future pregnancies after the virus has cleared from her blood. And while studies and research are constantly being updated, as it stands now, the Zika virus can remain in the bloodstream for up to two weeks and in semen for up to two months, says Dr. Brunilda Nazario, MD, an internist, endocrinologist, and associate medical editor at WebMD. "But your body builds antibodies after getting Zika, so you shouldn't get it again."

Despite the virus's expiration date, many millennials nevertheless feel the data is still being gathered, and that the long-term effects of the virus are not known. The confusion around **microcephaly and its potential link to the Zika virus** also plays a part. For Allen Walton, 28, married, and based out of Dallas, Zika remains a concern. "I run my own business and travel a lot since I work from a laptop," he tells *Condé Nast Traveler*. "But I'm absolutely avoiding traveling to Zika countries. I want to have healthy kids in the near future, and I don't have a real need to travel to those countries, so why risk it?"



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## Azores

This [Atlantic island chain](#) two-thirds of the way to Portugal appeals to adventure travelers, beach bums, and Europhiles alike. The nine volcanic islands use the euro and speak Portuguese, but more importantly, offer hikes through hedges of blue hydrangeas, wine-tasting tours, and breath-taking whale-watching lookouts. Really, you can't go wrong.

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Yet not all millennials are putting off travel to Zika destinations. Chelsea Martin of Austin, 27, says her travel patterns have not changed: "I understand the rationality about trying to avoid [Zika-affected destinations](#), but if you're not trying to become pregnant in the near future, I see no problem in traveling freely and wherever you want." Michelle Sander, 34, agrees. "In the next year, I'll be traveling to several countries that have been flagged for Zika. I do plan to start a family one day, but if I'm careful during my travels, it doesn't have to be a problem."

If you do travel to Zika-affected areas, Dr. Nazario suggests using [precautions when you travel](#): In addition to protection during the trip (wearing long pants and using [EPA-registered bug spray](#)), she recommends using condoms for two months post-travel to eliminate the risk of sexual transmission of the virus. She also suggests using insect repellent for two weeks after returning from the trip. Why? The virus can stay in your blood for up to two weeks, which means that if you're bit by a mosquito when you return from your trip, the mosquito could then transfer the virus to another person via bite. Using bug spray avoids this. But can you simply stop traveling to Zika-infected destinations in hopes of not getting it? Only somewhat: Cases of non-mosquito transmission of Zika have occurred (through sexual contact, for example) and since Zika has already been [reported in the U.S.](#) and will most likely continue to spread, a more logical solution is to simply exercise good judgement: Avoid travel to Zika-affected destinations if you're pregnant, obviously, but try and stay in places that have air conditioning—and screens on the windows. Regardless, women and their partners thinking about pregnancy should talk to their healthcare providers and confirm suggested timeframes for waiting to get pregnant after possible exposure to Zika.

*If you have questions about Zika and pregnancy, refer to the CDC's guide.*

