

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS TESTING



## For Pregnant Women Living in an Area with Zika

As a pregnant woman who lives in an area with Zika, you may be at risk of getting Zika at any time during your pregnancy. For this reason, CDC recommends testing at the start of prenatal care and again during the second trimester. If at any time you feel sick with fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes, you should see a doctor or other provider and be tested for Zika virus. Keep reading to learn more about what you might expect if you have Zika virus during pregnancy.

### Zika testing is complex

- **You may need more than one Zika test:**  
You may find out if you have Zika after one test. However, finding out if you have Zika can require up to three different tests, because the result of one test may require more testing to find out if you recently had a Zika virus infection. You may wait different amounts of time for results of each test to come back.
- **Understanding test results can be challenging:**  
Zika virus is similar to other viruses that are carried by mosquitoes. Testing for Zika may also detect these other mosquito-borne viruses. Sometimes even after testing, we may not know which type of virus you were infected with. Each test result is important, because it helps your doctor or other provider decide which virus is most likely and how best to care for you during pregnancy.



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

## Testing Process

### Step One

Your doctor will start by ordering a test to look for antibodies, which the body makes to fight infections. These antibodies are usually in your body for 2-12 weeks after infection.

- If your antibody test is negative, it means there is no evidence you were recently infected with Zika.
- If your antibody test is positive, more testing is needed to be sure. The antibody testing can sometimes show results that are positive even when a person isn't actually infected. For example, the test might detect antibodies to a similar mosquito-borne infection, such as dengue.

### Step Two

If your antibody test (step 1 test) was positive, your healthcare provider will order a test that looks for Zika genetic material, called RNA, which can be in blood and urine.

- A positive result means that you have Zika.
- A negative result means another test is needed. A negative test may mean that you had Zika, but your body cleared the virus from your system, or your antibody test was positive because you had an infection similar to Zika.

### Step Three

If you tested negative for Zika RNA, a third test is needed to confirm the antibodies from Step 1 are for Zika. This test takes the longest for results. Your doctor or other provider will work with your state or local health department 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 give another sample.

## Testing Results

### Positive test results

Testing positive for Zika during pregnancy lets your doctor or other 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.

### Inconclusive (not positive or negative) test results

Sometimes, if the tests aren't clearly positive or negative, the results are considered "inconclusive," meaning we're not sure if you had the virus. If the test results are inconclusive, your doctor or other 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 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 virus infection, you will get routine prenatal care, which is what CDC recommends. If your doctor or other provider sees signs of Zika virus infection during an ultrasound, then you may need additional tests.

