



Sixty seconds on . . . Zika and the Olympics

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Can we run rings round Zika?

Infectious disease specialists seem to think so. They estimate that, in a worst case scenario, three to 37 of the 500 000 people travelling to Rio for the 2016 Olympic Games (5-21 August) and Paralympic Games (7-18 September) will bring the Zika virus back to their home countries.¹

Can I dress like an athlete?

I'm afraid not. There's currently no vaccine or drug to prevent Zika virus infection, so avoidance measures are the order of the day. That means ditching the shorts and vest for long trousers and long sleeved shirts and spraying exposed skin with an effective mosquito repellent (20-50% DEET). When indoors, use air conditioning and keep windows and doors shut. The game plan should also include practising safe sex and avoiding conception during the games and for eight weeks after returning home.

So, go armed with a giant bottle of repellent?

Actually, no. If you're heading for Rio take small bottles of mosquito repellent below 100 mL so that you can spray yourself as soon as you get off the plane. Olympic venues will have airport-style security with limits on the volume of liquids you can carry.

Who should bow out?

If you're pregnant or planning to conceive in the near future, any area with active Zika virus transmission is off limits because of the confirmed risk to fetal neural development. If you have an immune condition or are taking immunosuppressants you should get specialist advice because of the potential risk of Guillain-Barré syndrome.

I hear that hanging a chicken over the bed can help

Recent research suggested that malaria transmitting mosquitoes actively avoid chickens.² But a bed net is a better option. And make sure that you sleep under a net for daytime naps when *Aedes* mosquitoes are most active. Better to eat the chicken, but make sure it's piping hot: food poisoning is a greater risk in Brazil than contracting Zika.

1 Lewnard JA, Gonsalves G, Ko AI. Low risk for international Zika virus spread due to the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. *Ann Intern Med* 2016; doi:10.7326/M16-1628.

2 Jalela KT, Hill SR, Birgersson G, Tekie H, Ignell R. Chicken volatiles repel host-seeking malaria mosquitoes. *Malar J* 2016;15:354. doi:10.1186/s12936-016-1386-3 pmid: 27439360.

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