

Canada moves to protect blood supply from Zika virus

February 3 2016

Canadian blood agencies announced Wednesday a temporary restriction on blood donations aimed at keeping the Zika virus out of the nation's blood supply.

Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada, the continental United States or Europe will be ineligible to give [blood](#) for three weeks upon their return from abroad "to mitigate the risk of the Zika virus entering the Canadian blood supply," Canadian Blood Services said in a statement.

Hema-Quebec, which is responsible for blood services in the French-speaking province of Quebec, put a similar measure in place.

The 21-day waiting period also applies to cord blood and stem cell donors who have travelled to affected areas.

"The risk of a Canadian donor transmitting the Zika virus to a blood recipient is very low," Canadian Blood Services said, although one case has been reported in Brazil. A case of transmission through [sexual intercourse](#) was also reported Tuesday in the US state of Texas.

"The mosquito that carries the virus does not live in Canada due to our colder climate (and) there have been very few reported cases of Zika virus infection in travellers who acquired the virus abroad," it noted.

The mosquito-borne Zika [virus](#) has spread to 26 countries in South and

Central America and the Caribbean. It holds little danger for most people but has been linked to a surge in cases of microcephaly, a condition which causes babies to develop abnormally small heads, leading to permanent disability or death.

The symptoms resemble those of a mild case of flu—headache, muscle and joint pain, mild fever, and a rash. In 70 to 80 percent of cases, the disease goes unnoticed.

The first Canadian cases involving travellers infected abroad were reported last week.

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