

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Health Officials Urge Awareness of Zika Virus, Travel Recommendations

No reported cases to date in N.C.

RALEIGH - The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is encouraging all North Carolinians to be aware of the risk of Zika virus infection before traveling to Central America, South America or the Caribbean.

To date, no cases of Zika virus infection have been reported in North Carolina.

“Pregnant women are urged to take note of the recent CDC travel recommendations advising that travel to areas with active virus transmission be postponed if possible,” said Randall Williams, MD, State Health Director. “Suspected cases of Zika are now required to be reported. Our State Laboratory for Public Health is currently coordinating testing of Zika virus with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and has a history of rapidly implementing testing for emerging threats.”

Zika virus is transmitted through the bite of an infectious mosquito. Symptoms include rash and red eyes. Less common symptoms include fever, joint pains and muscle aches. Only about one in five people infected with Zika virus will show symptoms.

A pregnant woman infected with Zika virus can pass the virus to her unborn baby. A serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly, and other adverse pregnancy outcomes have been reported in some mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a travel advisory recommending pregnant women consider postponing travel to any area with active Zika virus transmission. Women who are trying to become pregnant should talk to their doctors about the risk of Zika virus infection before traveling.

State health officials are in constant communication with local health departments to work with health providers, including obstetricians and gynecologists, to ensure they have the latest information, as well as access to guidance and testing. Testing for Zika virus should be done for anyone who displays signs or symptoms within two weeks of travel to an area with active Zika virus transmission. Pregnant women who have ultrasound findings of microcephaly or other abnormalities, and have reported travel to areas with Zika virus activity should also be tested.

While the primary mosquitos that carry Zika virus are not believed to be widespread in North Carolina, individuals are always encouraged, as a routine precaution, to take steps to prevent mosquito bites, such as:

- Wear insect repellent registered with the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Use air conditioning or make sure window and door screens are in place.

Again, no cases of Zika virus infection have been reported in North Carolina to date.

For more information about Zika virus for patients and health care providers, please visit:

<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/zika.html> or www.cdc.gov/zika

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