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Zika Virus: A Message from Cobb & Douglas Public Health

February 5, 2016 | By: Valerie Crow

Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH) urges residents to be safe when they travel and be aware of the Zika virus (pronunciation: zee-kah), carried by mosquitoes. Residents in Cobb and Douglas counties should understand the possible dangers of the Zika virus as more information from the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) continues to circulate regarding the disease.

These agencies caution travelers headed to Central American countries where transmission of Zika virus has been ongoing, particularly for pregnant women, and urge travelers to protect themselves from mosquito bites. The CDC has issued several [travel notices](#) indicating where the Zika virus has been reported

There is a danger of travelers going to areas where the virus is being spread and becoming sick after returning home to the U.S. Returning travelers also have the potential to spread the virus because mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person while they are infectious. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. According to the CDC, the spread of the virus through blood or sexual contact has also been reported.

Symptoms of Zika include: fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache. CDPH asks residents to speak to their healthcare provider if they experience any of these symptoms and have traveled to the affected countries in the two weeks prior to symptom onset.

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat the Zika virus, but there are precautions returning travelers and residents can take to protect themselves from mosquitos. The best way to do this is to observe the following tips known as "The Five D's."

The Five D's

- **Daytime** – Mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus usually bite during the daytime. Protect yourself.
- **Dress** – Wear loose-fitting, long sleeved shirts and pants to reduce the amount of exposed skin.
- **DEET** – Cover exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET, which is the most effective repellent against mosquito bites.
- **Drain** – Empty any containers holding standing water because they can be excellent breeding grounds for virus-carrying mosquitoes.
- **Doors** – Make sure doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly, and fix torn or damaged screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house.

For more information about the Zika virus, please visit cdc.gov/zika or dph.georgia.gov/zika-virus.

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Zika Virus

In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil and on Feb 1, 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Zika virus a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). As of March 16, 2016, no local mosquito-borne Zika virus disease cases have been reported in US states, but there have been travel-associated cases. Zika virus will continue to spread and it will be difficult to determine how and where the virus will spread over time.

Symptoms

80%

of people
won't have
symptoms

Of those that experience symptoms, may have:

- Fever
- Joint Pain
- Rash
- Muscle Pain
- Headache
- Conjunctivitis (red eye)

Mild illness usually lasts for several days-1 week. For those that are symptomatic, Dengue and Chikungunya should also be considered.

Transmission

Mosquito Bites

Primarily spread through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito (*A. aegypti* and *A. albopictus*). These are the same mosquitoes that spread dengue and chikungunya viruses.



Maternal

Can be passed to the infant during delivery and during pregnancy. Adverse pregnancy and infant outcomes are currently being studied. No reports of the virus being spread through breastfeeding.

Blood

There have been multiple reports of blood transfusion transmission cases in Brazil. During the French Polynesian outbreak, 2.8% of blood donors tested positive for Zika and in previous outbreaks, the virus has been found in blood donors.



Sexual Transmission

Can be spread by a man to his sex partners. In known cases of likely sexual transmission, the men were symptomatic, but the virus can be spread before, during, and after symptoms develop. The virus is present in semen longer than in blood.

Diagnosis

Currently a commercial test for Zika virus does not exist. Public Health is conducting surveillance testing only.

A physician in the Cobb and Douglas County area can request testing through public health by calling:

770-514-2432 (Ask for Epidemiology)

OR

1-866-PUB-HLTH (After Hours)

Prevention

A vaccine does NOT exist.

Avoid mosquito bites:

- Wear long sleeve and long pants
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use EPA registered insect repellent.

Abstain from sex or use condoms appropriately.

Limit travel to Zika affected countries:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/zika>