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Protect Yourself Against Zika Virus During Spring Break Travel

Take precautions to prevent mosquito bites when traveling to areas with active Zika transmission

COLUMBUS – Spring Break is under way, and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is reminding Ohioans to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites if you are traveling to areas with active Zika virus transmission. Zika has spread to about 62 countries and territories that include popular Spring Break destinations such as Mexico, the Bahamas and Puerto Rico. For the latest list of the current CDC travel advisories [click here](#).

“Zika virus is primarily spread through the bite of an infected mosquito, and if you are traveling to an area with active transmission, make sure you take appropriate steps to avoid mosquito bites,” said Sietske de Fijter, ODH State Epidemiologist and Bureau Chief of Infectious Diseases. “Pregnant women should not travel to Zika-affected areas because a Zika infection during pregnancy can cause certain birth defects.”

There have been 5,139 travel-associated Zika virus cases across the United States since January 2015. Ohio had 94 confirmed travel-associated Zika cases and 1 sexual transmission Zika case in 2016 and 2 cases so far in 2017. The primary mosquito that transmits Zika virus is found in the tropics and southern U.S., but it is not known to be established in Ohio. A relative of this mosquito is established in Ohio and may potentially transmit the Zika virus.

Zika virus can be passed through sexual transmission, even if the infected person does not have symptoms. Men who have traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission should use a condom every time during sex or abstain from sexual activity if their partner is pregnant. Women who have had possible exposure to Zika virus should wait at least eight weeks before having unprotected sex.

“As a precaution, be on the lookout for Zika virus symptoms after you get home from traveling to a Zika-affected area, and contact your healthcare provider if you believe that you are having Zika-like symptoms,” de Fijter said.

Take these steps to avoid mosquito bites when traveling to Zika-affected areas:

- Use EPA-registered insect repellent and use it per the product label.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use air conditioning or window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.

There is no indication that the Zika virus can spread from person to person through casual contact. Of people infected with the Zika virus, 80 percent do not have any symptoms. When symptoms occur, they are often mild, lasting from several days to a week, and include fever, rash, joint and muscle pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), and headache. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon.

Go to the ODH website at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/zika> for more information about Zika virus.