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Ohio Reports First Zika Virus Case in Returning Traveler

Zika virus tabletop exercise planning underway

UPDATE (5:30 p.m.)

Late today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notified ODH of a second Ohio case of Zika virus in a returning traveler from Haiti, a 21-year-old Stark County man. The two cases are not linked.

“Given the number of travelers between Ohio and Zika virus-affected countries, it would not be a surprise to see more cases,” said ODH Medical Director Dr. Mary DiOrio. “There is no vaccine available for Zika virus so it’s important for Ohioans traveling to affected areas to take steps to prevent mosquito bites.”

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health is reporting Ohio’s first case of Zika virus in a returning traveler from Haiti, a 30-year-old Cuyahoga County woman, city of Cleveland. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was reporting 35 cases of Zika virus in 12 states and the District of Columbia prior to Ohio’s case.

Zika virus is primarily transmitted through a mosquito bite, and there is no indication that it can spread from person to person through casual contact. CDC has confirmed a U.S. case of Zika virus infection in a non-traveler after the person’s sexual partner returned from an affected country and developed symptoms.

Planning is underway for a Zika virus tabletop exercise to ensure Ohio’s preparedness at the local and state levels prior to the 2016 mosquito season that runs from May to October.

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. Due to the possible association between Zika virus infections in pregnant women and certain birth defects, CDC recommends that pregnant women and women trying to get pregnant consider postponing travel to areas with Zika virus transmission.

“There is no vaccine available for Zika virus so it’s important for Ohioans traveling to affected areas to take steps to prevent mosquito bites,” said Dr. Mary DiOrio, medical director of the Ohio Department of Health. “There have been no reported cases of Zika virus disease transmission through mosquito bites anywhere in the continental U.S.”

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To prevent potential transmission through sexual contact, CDC recommends men with a pregnant sex partner abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex for the duration of the pregnancy. CDC also recommends that pregnant women without symptoms of Zika virus disease be offered testing 2 to 12 weeks after returning from areas with ongoing Zika virus transmission.

CDC has issued a travel alert for people traveling to the following regions and countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing: the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, U.S. territories; American Samoa; Barbados; Bolivia; Brazil; Cape Verde; Colombia; Costa Rica; Curaçao; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; French Guiana; Guadeloupe; Guatemala; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; Jamaica; Martinique; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Paraguay; Saint Martin; Samoa; Suriname; Tonga; and Venezuela. Zika virus disease has historically occurred in Africa, Southeast Asia and islands in the Pacific Ocean. In May 2015, Zika virus was found for the first time in the Western Hemisphere in northeastern Brazil. The virus has since spread throughout much of the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

The primary mosquito that transmits Zika virus is found in the tropics and southern U.S., but it is not established in Ohio. Another type of mosquito found in Ohio may potentially transmit Zika virus, although it has not yet been implicated in the transmission of human cases.

“Prevention of mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission is the same as prevention of any other mosquito-borne diseases,” Dr. DiOrio said. “This includes taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites – such as using insect repellents, limiting exposure where and when mosquitoes are most active, and removing breeding sources such as containers that collect standing water.”

For more information about the Zika virus, visit www.odh.ohio.gov/zika.

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