

Asian countries urge sick travelers to report Zika symptoms

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A health worker fumigates against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, a vector of the Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika viruses, inside a house in Lima, Peru, Friday, Jan. 29, 2016. The Zika virus causes only a mild illness in most people. But there's mounting evidence linking it to a birth defect, especially in Brazil. (AP Photo/Martin Mejia)

The Zika virus is spreading rapidly in Latin America, and Asian governments have issued advisories in a bid to contain the mosquito-

borne disease, which could be linked to birth defects and can cause temporary paralysis.

A look at some of the measures announced:

SOUTH KOREA

South Korean officials have advised pregnant women against traveling to Central and South America and required doctors to immediately report suspected cases.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare included the Zika virus among infectious diseases monitored as potential health threats. Doctors can face fines of up to 2 million won (\$1,654) for failing to report patients infected or showing symptoms of infection.

The Korea Center for Disease Control and Prevention has also been sending text messages to people traveling in regions where Zika has spread to inform them of the disease and preventive measures.

PHILIPPINES

The Department of Health has advised pregnant women to consider deferring non-essential travel to Zika-hit countries and reiterated its warning to the public to destroy all breeding places of mosquitoes, which can spread dengue and other tropical diseases.

No current Zika cases have been reported in the country but in 2012, a 15-year-old boy reportedly was infected in central Cebu city but

recovered fully, according to health department spokesman Dr. Lyndon Lee Suy.

Health officials have worked to raise public awareness about ways to prevent infections, including by using insect repellents and wearing protective clothing.

"We've repeatedly urged people not to be hard-headed and keep their surroundings clean and mosquito-free. Again, let's not spring into action only when an infection's already here," Lee Suy said.

MALAYSIA

Health authorities have asked travelers from South and Central America who display symptoms such as fever and rashes to immediately report to health centers.

Deputy Health Director Dr. Lokman Hakim Sulaiman said the move was imperative as it was not practical to conduct public health screenings at national gateways.

"The virus is difficult to detect and there is no quick point-of-care test which can be used," he said.

JAPAN

Japan's Foreign Ministry urges women to try to avoid traveling to Brazil and other affected countries during pregnancy, and advised all travelers to the region to use caution. It suggested wearing long sleeves and pants,

using mosquito sprays and avoid leaving out buckets and other containers that can catch water, and report to medical institutions in case of developing suspected symptoms.

The health authorities asked medical facilities to test suspected patients returning from affected areas and send samples to the national lab.

AUSTRALIA

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is advising pregnant women to avoid travel in areas where Zika is active.

The federal government is also asking Australian doctors to look out for signs of Zika infection in travelers returning from affected areas. A spokeswoman said Australian laboratories could diagnose the virus if required.

CAMBODIA

Cambodia's only Zika case recovered in 2010 after treatment.

The Health Ministry is advising caution and says it's following the situation in countries with the Zika virus closely. It's also urging people to destroy mosquito-breeding places.

INDIA

Health Minister Shri J. P. Naddahas has stressed controlling the spread of Aedes mosquitoes that transmit dengue and the Zika virus and breed in clean water.

"Community awareness plays an instrumental role in this regard," he said.

India is also stepping up surveillance and has set up a technical group to monitor the situation.

HONG KONG

Health officials are advising pregnant women and those planning pregnancy to adopt necessary anti-mosquito precautions, and consider deferring travel.

Secretary for Food and Health Dr. Ko Wing-man also said that because only up to one quarter of the infected persons might develop relatively mild illness, "the attention was therefore not too big."

Aedes mosquitoes are not found in Hong Kong, but the secretary said other species of mosquito present in the territory are also considered as possible carriers of the disease.

VIETNAM

The Vietnamese health authority has warned people coming from countries with the Zika virus to monitor their health for 14 days and if they develop fever to report to medical facilities.

The health authority also warned people to empty water containers and use mosquito nets to prevent the possible spread of the virus.

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