

Travelers urged to take precautions against mosquito-borne illnesses

February 9 2016

Penn State Global Programs is issuing advice to travelers about the risks of mosquito-borne illnesses, like Zika, based on the latest information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Penn Staters are currently traveling to affected areas and are likely to continue to do so. Officials, however, say Zika is not the only concern, as travelers should take simple precautions to prevent all mosquito-borne illnesses—such as Zika, dengue or chikungunya viruses.

The CDC has issued a "Level 2" alert for the Zika [virus](#), with particular recommendations for women of reproductive age. Out of an abundance of caution, [pregnant women](#), or women who may become pregnant, currently in or with travel plans to countries with Zika virus, should take particular steps to avoid exposure. Some of the current locales where the Zika virus has been identified are Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico and the Pacific Islands. For a full listing, visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information.

All travelers should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites, as this is the best prevention for illnesses like Zika, chikungunya or dengue.

Travelers should:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use accommodations with air conditioning and/or window screens.

- Sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- Apply insect repellent like those recommended by the CDC.

All available evidence indicates that the risk to an otherwise healthy adult from Zika virus is relatively limited. However, pregnant women and [women](#) that may become pregnant, with travel plans to an affected area, should consult a physician before traveling. Anyone who is symptomatic during or after travel should seek medical attention as soon as possible.

About one in five people infected with Zika virus become ill. Symptoms of Zika include fever, rash, [joint pain](#) or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include [muscle pain](#) and headache. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. For more information on Zika, visit www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/index.html.

Symptoms of dengue include high fever, headache, severe eye [pain](#) (behind eyes), joint and muscle pain, rash and mild bleeding manifestation (e.g., nose or gum bleed, petechiae or easy bruising). Visit www.cdc.gov/dengue/ for more information.

Symptoms of chikungunya usually begin 3-7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Signs include fever and joint pain, possible rash, swelling and headache. For more on chikungunya, visit www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/symptoms/index.html.

More information: For more on mosquito-borne illnesses and recommendations to avoid mosquito bites, visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites and www.cdc.gov/dengue/resources/FS_Mosquito_Bite_Prevention_Travelers.pdf

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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