

CDC may lift Zika travel advisory for Miami neighborhood

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(HealthDay)—America's top public health agency could lift its Zika

virus travel advisory for the Wynwood neighborhood of Miami as early as Monday, officials said Thursday afternoon.

"Barring any new local transmissions in the affected area, we are expecting to be able to update guidance early next week," Dr. Anne Schuchat, principal deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said during a media briefing.

Since early August, the CDC has urged pregnant women to avoid travel to the Wynwood neighborhood, based on evidence that mosquitoes had been actively transmitting Zika from person to person.

Zika is the first mosquito-borne virus known to cause terrible birth defects, most of them brain-related. The most common one is microcephaly, in which a child is born with an abnormally small brain and skull.

In other news, Congressional aides say Republicans are proposing to drop a restriction on Zika response money for Planned Parenthood that has held up release of at least \$1.1 billion to fight the mosquito-borne disease, according to the *Associated Press*.

Democrats have opposed the funding restriction on Planned Parenthood, which would have kept Zika money in Puerto Rico from being distributed to some clinics associated with Planned Parenthood. Republicans were trying to circumvent Planned Parenthood because of its abortion services.

If a deal is reached, Zika response funding would be added to must-pass legislation intended to prevent a federal government shutdown this fall, the *AP* reported.

President Barack Obama in February asked Congress for \$1.9 billion in emergency spending to fight Zika.

The Wynwood travel advisory constituted the first time the CDC ever warned people to avoid an American neighborhood due to an active infectious outbreak.

The potential lifting of the travel advisory came up during remarks by Owen Bale, director of the R House Restaurant in Wynwood, who discussed how being in the so-called "Zika zone" has harmed his business.

"We understand the travel advisory designation for Wynwood could be lifted this coming Monday, which is wonderful news," Bale said. "But business levels are returning to normal at an incredibly slow pace."

Schuchat confirmed in follow-up questions that the CDC is weighing the status of the advisory.

Federal and state health officials responded to the Wynwood Zika cases—the first local transmission of the virus in the United States—with heavy mosquito-control efforts, intensive blood testing, and epidemiologic efforts to track where people had been infected.

Health officials also urged local residents to rid their properties of any standing water, take steps to prevent mosquito bites, and come in for Zika testing if they are pregnant.

There currently are 70 known cases of locally transmitted Zika in the Miami-Dade County area, contracted either in Wynwood or in a second Zika zone at Miami Beach that also is under a travel advisory, according to state health officials.

The most recent Zika infection update for Florida includes: one person identified in the Wynwood area who experienced Zika symptoms in early August, four people associated with ongoing active transmission in

Miami Beach, and one Miami-Dade resident for whom officials aren't sure where the infection occurred.

Florida is the only state in which local transmission of Zika has been detected.

More than 20,870 cases of Zika have been reported in the United States and its territories, Schuchat said.

That includes 3,132 cases in the United States, of which 731 involve pregnant women, Schuchat said. At least 25 of these cases have resulted in a birth defect, miscarriage or lost pregnancy. Nearly all cases outside of Florida are related to travel to another country or territory where Zika transmission is active.

While there have been no reported locally transmitted cases of microcephaly in the continental United States, thousands of cases have been documented in Latin America and the Caribbean, with Brazil the epicenter of the outbreak.

Zika continues to rage at epidemic levels in Puerto Rico, where 17,315 cases of local transmission have been reported, according to the CDC.

"It's just an unprecedented situation where a mosquito bite can lead to birth defects and devastating long-term complications for a family," Schuchat said.

Zika has done serious economic harm to Wynwood, an arts district in northern Miami that has flourished in recent years, Bale said.

"On a typical weekend, you'd find the shops and streets packed with people," he said. "Zika brought an abrupt halt to that."

Since implementation of the travel advisory, revenue at Bale's restaurant is down 75 percent from last year, forcing the layoff of one-quarter of

his staff, he said.

Bale urged federal legislators to pass Zika funding. "If things continue to move so slowly, we will be forced to make more layoffs," he said. "Our remaining staff will see their income reduced further."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on [mosquito-borne diseases](#).

This Q & A will tell you [what you need to know about Zika](#).

To see the CDC list of sites where Zika virus is active and may pose a threat to pregnant women, click [here](#).

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