



News Release

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Holiday Travelers Reminded to Take Precautions to Prevent Zika

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today reminded holiday travelers to protect themselves from mosquito bites when traveling to areas with known transmission of Zika virus, including Mexico.

“Pregnant women and couples considering pregnancy need to be particularly cautious because Zika virus can cause severe birth defects,” said Dr. Smith. “Pregnant women are urged to avoid travel to areas with known Zika transmission if at all possible. If travel is necessary, it is extremely important to take steps to prevent mosquito bites.”

Many areas of Mexico continue to experience transmission of the Zika virus, particularly popular tourist destinations, including Cancun, Acapulco, Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta, Ixtapa, and Mazatlan. The states of Baja California Sur, where Cabo San Lucas is located, and Sonora, which borders Arizona, have recently reported local Zika virus transmission. While the state of Baja California bordering California has not reported local Zika virus transmission, the mosquitoes that transmit the virus are present along the border. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers any travel to Mexico to be a potential risk for Zika virus infection.

While there has been no local transmission of Zika virus in California to date, CDPH has confirmed 443 cases of travel-associated infections in the state. Florida and Texas have experienced locally transmitted cases of Zika.

Zika virus can spread through mosquito bites and can also be transmitted by both men and women during sex. Most people who are infected with Zika do not experience any symptoms, but should take precautions to avoid sexual transmission, even if they never had symptoms. All individuals, particularly women of childbearing age, should take steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites while traveling and when they return home. Sexually active people who travel to areas with Zika transmission should use condoms or other barriers to avoid getting or passing Zika during sex.

Couples planning pregnancy when either partner has been exposed to Zika virus should speak with a health care provider about a safe time to try to get pregnant. Men should wait six months to conceive after Zika exposure. Women who have been exposed should wait a minimum of eight weeks before becoming pregnant.

“The mosquitoes that can carry Zika virus and infect people live in many [areas of California](#),” said Dr. Smith. “If one of these mosquitoes bites an infected person, it can spread the virus by biting another person. That is why we ask people traveling to Mexico, or any other place where Zika exists, to take steps to prevent mosquito bites for three weeks after a trip, even if you don’t feel sick.”

To prevent mosquito bites, apply repellents containing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-registered ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label). When used as directed, these repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Individuals should wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and shoes when outdoors. Be sure window and door screens are in good condition to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

Though most people who are infected with Zika do not experience any symptoms, symptoms of infection can include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for Zika other than rest, fluids and fever relief.

More information about Zika can be found in the [December 2016 CDPH Health and Travel Advisory](#), and on the [CDPH](#) and [CDC](#) websites. In addition, the [Mexico Ministry of Health website](#) contains more Zika-related information.

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