The Zika Virus: What You Need to Know

What is the Zika Virus?: Zika Virus disease is caused by the Zika Virus, which is spread to people through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). According to Hays County Health Officials, the mosquito that carries Zika is native to Central Texas. Aedes mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and are located near populated areas. Aedes mosquitoes can also transmit dengue and chikungunya. Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 and is named after the Zika Forest in Uganda. By 1952 the first human cases of Zika were detected and since then, outbreaks have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization issued an alert (PAHO) regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. In February of 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Zika Virus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), no local mosquito-borne Zika virus disease cases have been reported in the United States. However, there have been travel-associated cases, including here in Texas.

Areas with Zika: United States

The number of Zika Cases among travelers who are visiting or returning to the United States are expected to increase. These cases could lead to the local spread of Zika in some areas of the United States.

Symptoms:

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint Pain
- Conjunctivitis (red eyes)
- Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache.
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Most people infected with the Zika virus won’t even know they have the disease because they won’t have symptoms.

The following information is from the CDC:

- The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.
- People usually don’t get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.
- Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for about a week but it can be found longer in some people.
- Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

There is no vaccine to prevent the Zika virus. If you have visited an area where Zika is found and you develop symptoms, see your doctor or healthcare provider and tell them when and where you traveled.

Areas with active mosquito-borne transmission of Zika virus

- Prior to 2015, Zika virus outbreaks occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands.
- In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infections in Brazil.
- Currently, outbreaks are occurring in many countries and territories.

Latest Travel Notice Information:

Zika and Pregnancy Concerns

According to the CDC, pregnant women primarily get the Zika virus through the bite of an infected mosquito. Zika can be also spread by a man to his sex partners. The virus can be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus during pregnancy or at delivery.

In Brazil, officials have reported an increase in the number of babies born with microcephaly. Microcephaly is a condition where a baby’s head is much smaller than expected. CDC Scientists say there is now enough evidence to conclude that Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause microcephaly, along with other severe brain defects. It has been linked to other problems in infants, including eye defects, hearing loss, and impaired growth. Scientists are still researching the full range of potential health problems that the Zika virus may cause during pregnancy.

The CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women. They say women who are pregnant should not travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. However, if you must travel to one of these areas, please speak with your doctor or other healthcare provider first and follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.
There are other mosquito-borne illnesses to keep in mind. According to Hays County Health Officials, the following are concerns in Texas: West Nile virus, St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, Western Equine Encephalitis, Dengue virus, La Crosse Encephalitis, Chikungunya virus, Rift Valley Fever virus and Zika virus.

**Mosquito Prevention**

When it comes to preventing mosquito’s, use the four D’s — Drain, Dress, Dusk and Deter.

**Drain** — Any container that can hold water for more than a few days is a mosquito-breeding ground. Make sure you drain all free standing water. With our recent rains, this is especially important to keep in mind.

**Dress smart** — Dress in long sleeves and pants to prevent mosquito bites on arms and legs. Wearing a hat can also help prevent mosquito bites.

**Dusk and Dawn** — Mosquitos are at their peak feeding times at dawn and dusk. Limit your time outdoors during this time. If you are outdoors, try to reduce your physical activity. Mosquitos are attracted to movement.

**Deter** — Invest in mosquito repellents, specifically those that contain DEET. You can also use picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.

**Hays County Mosquito Surveillance Program**

Hays County Development Services (HCDS) provides mosquito surveillance within the county to monitor and track mosquito-borne illnesses. HCDS sets up collection traps to capture samples of several mosquito species. This helps determine which areas are harboring disease-carrying mosquitos. The samples are sent to the Department of State Health Services in Austin to be examined. Collection is typically carried out from May until November throughout Texas.

**Helpful Links**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [http://www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/)

Hays County Health Department: [http://www.co.hays.tx.us/local-health-department.aspx](http://www.co.hays.tx.us/local-health-department.aspx)

Hays County Mosquito Surveillance Program: [http://www.co.hays.tx.us/mosquito-surveillance-program.aspx](http://www.co.hays.tx.us/mosquito-surveillance-program.aspx)

The information in this document was compiled from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Hays County Health Department.