

NEWS

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Department of Public Health and Human Services

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DPHHS officials announce first Zika virus infection in a returning traveler

State public health officials have identified the first case of Zika virus infection in Montana in an adult female from Missoula County who returned from a Zika-affected area. The infected individual is not pregnant.

Zika is a disease caused by a virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species of mosquito **not found in Montana**. Travelers returning from Zika-affected areas who have symptoms or are pregnant should consult with their health care provider.

“This case serves as a reminder that anyone traveling to Zika-affected parts of the world should be mindful of the health issues present in that region,” said Jim Murphy of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Communicable Disease Bureau.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the most common symptoms of Zika infection are fever, rash, joint pain and red, itchy eyes. Symptoms are usually mild and last several days to a week. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

Zika virus has recently been linked with serious health problems in pregnant women, primarily a birth defect known as microcephaly in children born to women who had a Zika infection. To minimize risks of complications, public health officials recommend that pregnant women or women wanting to get pregnant, follow CDC guidance to prevent Zika infections. There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus disease and no specific medical treatment for people who are infected.

Foremost, CDC recommends pregnant women should consider postponing travel to affected areas. If travel cannot be postponed, use of insect repellent and /or clothes treated with permethrin, and staying in places with air conditioning and window and door screens while in affected areas to prevent mosquito bites is strongly recommended.

Additional recommendations to prevent the sexual spread of Zika virus from returning travelers have also been issued by public health officials. Women who are pregnant are reminded to use condoms or abstain from sex with a partner returning recently from a Zika-affected area. Couples who are trying to get pregnant and have returned from Zika-affected areas are encouraged to consult with their health care provider.

Montana is one of 25 states reporting a travel-associated case of Zika.

Across the U.S. thousands of college students, members of faith organizations, healthcare professionals and others are now planning spring trips to warmer locations for fun or charity work. Travel can be a safe, healthy, and enjoyable activity, but it's important to protect yourself and your family while traveling. Avoid diseases spread by mosquitoes by making prevention an essential part of planning for a trip.

The DPHHS Zika website has detailed information on preventions, signs and symptoms of the illness and a list of Zika-affected areas. The page includes a direct link to CDC for information about how to prevent Zika virus, symptoms, and detailed information for health care providers, facts sheets and more. Go to www.dphhs.mt.gov