



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Melaney Arnold – 217-558-0500

melaney.arnold@illinois.gov

Two Illinois Residents Test Positive For Zika Virus

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is alerting the public of the potential of contracting Zika virus while traveling abroad. Zika virus is spread to people through mosquito bites, similar to West Nile virus or dengue fever. While illness is usually mild and severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon, there is a possible link between Zika virus infection in pregnant women and subsequent birth defects.

Two pregnant Illinois residents who recently traveled to countries where Zika virus is found have tested positive for the virus. Physicians are monitoring their health and pregnancies.

“There is virtually no risk to Illinois residents since you cannot contract Zika virus from another person, but only through the bite of an infected mosquito,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “But since this is a time of year when people travel to warmer climates and countries where Zika virus is found, we are urging residents, especially pregnant women, to take preventive measures when traveling in affected countries and check [health travel advisories](#).”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a travel alert (Level 2-Practice Enhanced Precautions) for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing, including: Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

This alert follows reports in Brazil of [microcephaly](#) and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. However, additional studies are needed to further characterize this relationship.

Until more is known, CDC recommends that pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women, women trying to become pregnant, or women who are thinking about becoming pregnant and must travel to one of these areas should talk with their doctor or other health care provider first and strictly follow [steps to avoid mosquito bites](#) during the trip.

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The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms can last from several days to weeks. There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika virus infection.

When traveling to countries where Zika virus has been reported, all travelers should take steps to prevent mosquito bites, such as using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and staying in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens. More information about Zika virus can be found on the [CDC website](#). CDC has also developed interim Zika virus [guidelines for health care providers](#) in the United States caring for pregnant women.

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