



For immediate release

July 22, 2016

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First Zika Case in County Apparently Related to Travel

Local public health officials today announced the first confirmed case of Zika virus infection in Lewis and Clark County. The infected person, a woman who was not pregnant, recently traveled to another country with an active Zika outbreak. She became ill shortly after returning home.

The case is only the third reported in Montana since the virus turned up in the Western Hemisphere in May 2015. Two travel-related cases have been found in Missoula, the first last February and the other just this week.

There have more than 1,400 travel-associated cases of Zika in the United States, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). No locally acquired cases have been confirmed.

Zika virus spreads to people mostly through the bite of certain kinds of mosquitoes (of the genus *Aedes*). Their habitat includes Latin America, the Caribbean, and many southern and eastern states. They are not native to Montana.

Zika virus also can be spread through sex, so pregnant women whose male sex partners have lived in or traveled to an area with Zika virus should either use condoms or avoid sex during pregnancy. Zika can also spread from a pregnant woman to her baby.

Most people infected with Zika experience mild or no symptoms. These include fever, rash, joint pain, muscle pain, eye irritation, and headache. Symptoms last from several days to a week.

Zika virus during pregnancy can be more serious. In some cases it can cause birth defects, such as microcephaly, a rare condition in which an infant's head is much smaller than usual. Babies with microcephaly often have smaller brains that might not develop properly.

For this reason, the CDC recommends that pregnant women avoid traveling to any area where Zika virus is spreading.

Zika virus also has been associated with increased reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome, an uncommon condition of the nervous system. Only five cases of Guillain-Barre associated with the Zika virus had been reported in the nation as of July 20 and another 15 in the U.S. Territories.

There is no vaccine against Zika virus. The best way to prevent it is to avoid mosquito bites, especially when traveling to areas with active outbreaks:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under a mosquito net if you're not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.
- Use insect repellants registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. When used as directed, these are safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Never use insect repellents on babies under 2 months old.
- Use mosquito netting to cover babies under 2 months old in strollers, cribs, etc.

Anyone concerned about infection with Zika virus should talk to their medical provider and share their travel history. For more information, visit the Lewis and Clark Public Health website at www.LewisAndClarkHealth.org