

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Resident Tests Positive for Zika Virus

Bismarck, N.D.— The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) recently received confirmation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that a woman who traveled to Puerto Rico while pregnant has tested positive for Zika virus. While Zika is associated with microcephaly and other birth defects, none have been identified in the infant. As a precaution, the NDDoH plans to monitor the infant for a year. The woman is the first North Dakota resident to test positive for Zika.

“Pregnant women should not travel to countries with Zika transmission, and if they must travel, be extremely careful to avoid mosquito bites. The CDC recently announced that Zika virus infection during pregnancy is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects in infants. Couples trying or planning to become pregnant should talk with their health care provider about their travel plans,” said Laura Cronquist, epidemiologist with the NDDoH.

Zika virus is spread primarily through the bite of an *Aedes* species mosquito. It can be passed from an infected mother to her fetus. In addition, the virus can be transmitted sexually from a man to his sex partners. To prevent the spread of Zika to sex partners, the NDDoH recommends the following:

- Men returning from Zika affected areas who have a sexual partner that is pregnant should either abstain from sexual activity or correctly and consistently use condoms for all sexual contact for the duration of the pregnancy
- Men diagnosed with Zika or who had symptoms of Zika after returning from a Zika affected area who have non-pregnant sexual partners should consider abstaining from or correctly and consistently using condoms for all sexual contact for at least six months after symptoms began
- Men who did not develop symptoms of Zika after returning from Zika affected areas who have non-pregnant sexual partners should consider abstaining from or correctly and consistently using condoms for all sexual contact for at least eight weeks after their return

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“The mosquitoes in North Dakota do not spread Zika virus, so our prevention efforts are focused on raising awareness about the risk of travel-associated and sexually transmitted Zika virus infections,” said Laura Cronquist, epidemiologist with the NDDoH.

Many diseases, including Zika, dengue fever and yellow fever, can be transmitted by mosquitoes. All travelers should protect themselves from mosquito bites in the same way they would at home, and by following the recommendations at www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention.

After returning from Zika affected areas, the NDDoH has the following additional recommendations:

- Pregnant women should consult their health care provider and seek testing for Zika virus between two and 12 weeks after returning from a Zika affected area
- All travelers should consult their health care provider if they develop illness, such as sudden onset of fever, rash, conjunctivitis (red eyes), joint pain, muscle soreness or pain, or headache, within 14 days of returning from Zika affected areas
- Avoid getting additional bites from other mosquitos during the first week of illness to help spread transmission
- Even if they do not feel sick, travelers returning to the United States from an area with Zika should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for three weeks following their return

More information regarding Zika virus, including an up-to-date list of destinations with confirmed Zika transmission, can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/zika. Anyone who plans to travel outside of the United States should consult a health care provider prior to traveling (ideally six months prior), as certain vaccines and medications may be recommended to prevent disease. For more information, please visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel.

For more information, contact Laura Cronquist at lcronquist@nd.gov, or at 1.800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

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