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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Press Release

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Pregnant Women Urged to Avoid Going to Areas with Zika Risk

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) advises pregnant women, and men and women of child bearing age, not to go to areas with Zika. If they must go to places with known transmission of the Zika virus, CDPH recommends they protect themselves against sexual transmission of Zika and take steps to prevent mosquito bites. Pregnant couples in which one or both partners were in an area with Zika should use condoms every time they have sex, or not have sex during the pregnancy in order to reduce the risk of transmitting Zika to the fetus.

"Whether you work in a location with Zika, visit family who live in places with Zika or travel for leisure to places with Zika, you need to protect yourself," said CDPH Director and State Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith. "Anyone living in or traveling to areas with ongoing Zika activity may be at risk for infection. It is very important to protect yourself, and if you are pregnant, protect your developing baby from the serious birth defects that can result from Zika infection."

Zika virus can spread through mosquito bites and can also be transmitted by both men and women during sex. Sexually active people who travel to areas with Zika transmission should use condoms or other barriers to avoid getting or passing Zika. Condoms help reduce the chance of sexual transmission of the Zika virus, but should not be the only form of contraception for pregnancy prevention. Most people who are infected with Zika do not experience symptoms (fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes), but they should still take precautions to avoid sexual transmission.

Couples planning pregnancy when either partner has been exposed to Zika virus should speak with a health care provider about a safe time to try to get pregnant. A health care provider can also provide information on the most effective contraceptive methods.

"The best thing pregnant women can do to protect themselves and their unborn baby is to stay away from areas where Zika is circulating," Dr. Smith said.

While there has been no local transmission of Zika virus in California to date, CDPH has confirmed 574 cases of travel-associated infections in the state. Florida and Texas have experienced locally transmitted cases of Zika.

People who go to areas with known Zika transmission should take steps to avoid mosquito bites by doing the following:

- Use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol for long-lasting protection. If using sunscreen and insect repellent, apply sunscreen first and then the repellent. It is recommended and safe for pregnant women, and women who are breastfeeding, to use an EPA- registered insect repellent according to the product label. Do not use insect repellent on infants less than two months of age.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use air conditioning or window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If mosquitoes may come indoors, sleep under a bed net.
- Reduce the number of mosquitoes by emptying standing water from containers, such as flowerpots and buckets.

More information about Zika can be found in the [February 2017 CDPH Health and Travel Advisory](#) and on [the CDPH website](#), which includes resources about [Zika and travel](#), [Zika and pregnancy](#), [Zika and sex](#), [Zika and family planning](#) and [mosquito bite prevention](#). Additional information is also available on [the CDC website](#) at www.cdph.ca.gov, or Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367.

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