

System Office of Risk Services
(907) 786-1140
(907) 786-1412 FAX



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA

Many Traditions One Alaska

1815 Bragaw Street
Suite 206
Anchorage, AK 99508
www.alaska.edu/risksafety

February 3, 2016

Dear UA Faculty, Students, and Staff,

Many of you have heard of the Zika virus recently. UA Risk Services is working to provide accurate and timely information to increase your personal awareness and safety on this developing issue.

Prior to 2015, Zika virus outbreaks have occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. In 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infections in Brazil. Currently, outbreaks are occurring in many countries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Zika virus will continue to spread and it will be difficult to determine how the virus will spread over time.

According to news reports, there have been 31 documented Zika cases in the U.S. (11 states and the District of Columbia), though in all of those cases people got infected elsewhere.

The Zika virus is transmitted primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. The virus can also be transmitted through infected blood, from mother to child (possibly during pregnancy), and sexual contact. CDC recommends you should abstain from sex or use condoms the right way every time to prevent the transmission of the Zika virus.

About one in five people infected with Zika virus will develop symptoms, which include fever, rash, joint pain, and pink eye, and some have muscle aches, headache, and pain behind the eyes. The illness is usually mild, with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. The top concern is for pregnant women who get infected.

The (CDC) has recently issued travel guidance regarding this mosquito-borne virus, which is associated with microcephaly (small head and brain in newborns) and possibly other poor pregnancy outcomes in women infected during pregnancy.

Efforts are underway to produce a vaccine, but there is currently no vaccine and no treatment for this virus; the only way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten by infected mosquitos.

Because there is neither a vaccine nor prophylactic medications available to prevent Zika virus infection, CDC recommends that all pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas where

Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women or women who are considering becoming pregnant who must travel to one of these areas should consult with their health care provider before traveling and follow steps to prevent mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents as directed.
- Insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, and IR3535 are safe for pregnant and nursing women and children older than 2 months when used according to label.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (boots, pants, socks, tents).
- Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.

If you are pregnant and have traveled to a country reporting Zika, the CDC is recommending that you see your physician for counseling and testing. The CDC just released [interim guidelines](#) for pregnant women and their health care providers. Information and guidelines change frequently, so continue to check this CDC site if you are in an at-risk group. For general updated information on Zika, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

The University of Alaska will continue to monitor this global situation. Please contact Risk Services with additional questions or concerns.

Greg Busch
Interim Chief Risk Officer