SPRING BREAK TRAVEL – ZIKA VIRUS INFORMATION

WHAT IS ZIKA VIRUS?

Zika was discovered in 1946 in Africa. The virus has since spread to Central and South America, Mexico, the Pacific Islands, and the Caribbean (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). To date Brazil has the largest outbreak with Colombia as the second most affected country.

HOW DO I GET IT?

Zika virus is most commonly transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes. This species of mosquito is common in Central and South America. While rare, spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual contact also have been reported.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of Zika are usually mild with about one in five infected persons becoming ill. The most common symptoms include fever, rash, joint and muscle pain, headache and red eyes. There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika.

WHAT IS THE RISK?

The greatest risk of the virus is to pregnant women or those who may become pregnant, due to possible links to microcephaly. Microcephaly is a birth defect that causes small head size and incomplete brain development.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued travel guidance for pregnant women warning them to avoid visiting places where the Zika virus is present.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Insect precautions and personal protection measures against day-biting mosquitoes are the main prevention strategy, especially for pregnant women who choose to travel to affected areas. Aedes mosquitoes are daytime feeders, with 2 peaks of biting activity during the day: the first 2-3 hours after dawn and the mid-to-late afternoon hours. This pattern, however, turns to one of all-day activity during overcast days. In risk areas, travelers (especially pregnant women) should be especially vigilant in applying repellent during daytime hours, particularly during peak biting times.

Additional information is available from the CDC at the following link:
Bug bite prevention:  wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites