

DSHS Reports First Locally Acquired Zika Case

The Texas Department of State Health Services today reported the first case of Zika virus disease contracted in Texas, involving a Dallas County resident who had sexual contact with someone who acquired the Zika infection while traveling abroad. Case details are being evaluated, but the possibility of sexual transmission from an infected person to a non-infected person is likely in this case.

DSHS has seven other Texas cases of Zika virus disease, all related to foreign travel to areas where Zika is currently being transmitted. Zika virus is transmitted to people primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito, though there also have been reports of transmission through sexual contact. The disease can cause fever, rash, muscle and joint aches and red eyes but also has been linked to the birth defect microcephaly and other poor birth outcomes in some women infected during their pregnancy.

“We’re working closely with our partners to gather more information about the virus and this transmission in Dallas and to determine whether any additional public health interventions are needed,” said Dr. John Hellerstedt, DSHS commissioner.

Texas alerted health care providers in January to be aware of and consider Zika virus as they see patients and is pursuing the ability to test for Zika at the state laboratory in Austin. Testing currently occurs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

State health officials continue to encourage people to follow travel precautions. The CDC is currently advising pregnant women to delay travel to foreign countries where Zika is being transmitted. To prevent the spread of the disease, people traveling to those areas should carefully follow steps to avoid mosquito bites while there and for seven days after returning home.

People can protect themselves from mosquito bites by:

- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Using EPA-registered insect repellents
- Using permethrin-treated clothing
- Staying and sleeping in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms
- Avoiding or limiting outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week, and hospitalizations are rare. Most people exposed to Zika virus won't develop any symptoms at all. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for the virus.

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