

Zika Info from the Board of Health

In the past few months, there has been much publicity about Zika appearing in the news. While the situation regarding Zika illness is evolving, there are some things we know for sure.

Zika is a viral infection that is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquito that transmits Zika is called *Aedes aegypti*. It is the same mosquito that transmits the virus for Dengue fever and Chikungunya. Outbreaks typically occur in tropical Africa and southeast Asia. In May 2015, Brazil reported the first outbreak of Zika in the Americas. Zika is now present in tropical areas. Locally transmitted cases of Zika have not been identified in the United States, although the potential for local transmission exists as *Aedes* mosquitoes are present in many states. In late December, the New Jersey Department of Health identified New Jersey's first laboratory-confirmed case of Zika in a Bergen County woman who was exposed while in Columbia.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. The CDC has issued a travel alert for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Until more is known and out of an abundance of caution, the CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant.

With the warmer weather coming, the Board of Health strongly advises that it is important to protect yourself, your family, and community from mosquitoes. This includes:

- Eliminating standing water in and around your home. **Once a week** empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, or trash containers.
- Tightly cover storage containers (buckets, cisterns, rain barrels) so that mosquitoes cannot get inside to lay eggs.
- For containers without lids, use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.
- If you have a septic tank, repair cracks or gaps and cover open vent or plumbing pipes.
- Keep mosquitoes out of your home by using screens on windows and doors, repair holes in screens and use air conditioning when available.
- Prevent mosquito bites by using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or IR3535. **Always** use as directed. If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks and tents). You can purchase pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself. If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.

For additional information about Zika, affected countries, travel alerts, mosquito bite prevention, etc. and the current outbreak, please visit:

<http://www.nwbrhc.org> or

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html> or

<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/izdp/vbi.shtml>