Health Advisory from Kean Health Services

Zika Virus Health Information

Kean University Health Services would like to alert our community about the Zika virus as individuals start to consider travel plans for the upcoming spring break and summer months. This mosquito-borne virus has been declared a Global Health Emergency by the World Health Organization. Local transmission of the virus has been identified in at least 25 countries in South and Central America and the Caribbean. Anyone traveling to these areas is at risk of infection without proper protection.

Transmission

The Zika virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of the Aedes species mosquito, which is currently not found in the United States. The virus can also be transmitted from an infected pregnant mother to her unborn child. The virus has been reported to cause serious birth defects. In addition, there has been a confirmed case of sexually transmitted Zika virus in the United States from a traveler who returned from a high risk country.

Symptoms

About one in five people infected with the Zika virus will become symptomatic. Characteristic clinical symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms usually occur within two to seven days of being bitten and in most cases are mild. Guillain-Barre’ syndrome has been reported in some patients following the Zika virus but severe symptoms are uncommon.

Protection and Implications

There is no vaccine for the Zika Virus. Pregnant women or those who are planning to become pregnant should avoid all travel to areas where Zika virus is present. If traveling to a high risk area it is advised to use CDC recommended insect repellents and keep skin covered. This will help to protect travelers from not only the Zika virus but also other mosquito-borne infections such as Dengue and Chikungunya. Until more is known about sexual transmission of Zika virus avoid unprotected sexual contact with anyone who has traveled to a high risk area.

For a list of high risk countries go to: www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html.

For more additional information about Zika virus go to: www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html.

For resources about insect repellents go to: www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you

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