



St. Norbert College Health and Wellness Services

Zika Virus Update

The Zika virus outbreak in Central and South America and Mexico is an evolving public health situation. The virus is also known to circulate in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. This virus is spread through mosquito bites and through sexual contact with someone infected with the virus. Symptoms of infection include fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Most people have very mild to no symptoms, however infected pregnant women can pass it on to their unborn babies, which is believed to cause microcephaly (small head and small brain). There is no vaccine or medication treatment for this virus.

The best protection is preventing exposure to mosquitos and abstinence or barrier protected sexual contact with anyone who may have been exposed to the Zika virus.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have issued travel alerts to Central and South America for pregnant women and those considering pregnancy. Women who are pregnant or intending to become pregnant are advised to postpone travel to any of the identified areas. Travelers should also take precaution to prevent mosquito bites, such as wearing long sleeves and pants while outside and applying mosquito repellent (with DEET or EPA-registered insect repellent, such as Off, Cutter, Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus, Repel, etc.). Additionally, abstinence or barrier protection is advised for sexual contact with anyone who may have been exposed to the Zika virus.

Measures are being taken by the WHO and country Ministries of Health to spray endemic areas, but this will take time and should not be relied on to provide immediate protection for pregnant or soon-to-be pregnant women.

For more information, please go to the CDC webpage www.cdc.gov/zika and the World Health Organization webpage www.who.org

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