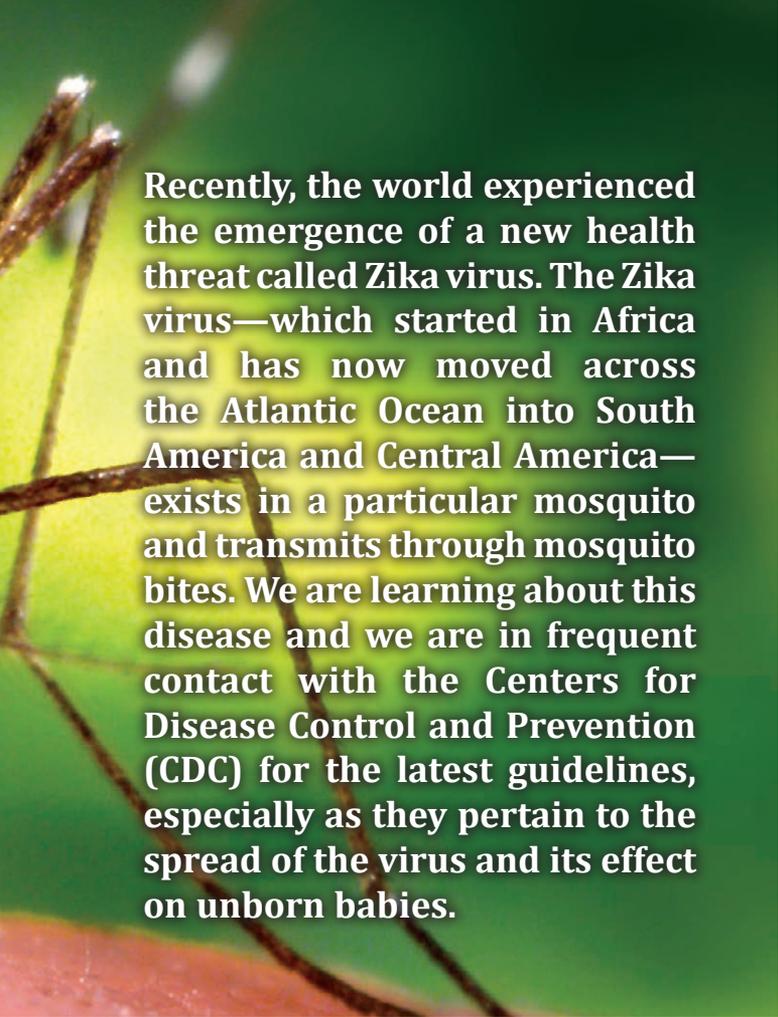


# Mosquito Control and the Zika Virus





**Recently, the world experienced the emergence of a new health threat called Zika virus. The Zika virus—which started in Africa and has now moved across the Atlantic Ocean into South America and Central America—exists in a particular mosquito and transmits through mosquito bites. We are learning about this disease and we are in frequent contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the latest guidelines, especially as they pertain to the spread of the virus and its effect on unborn babies.**

To date, we have had no transmission of Zika virus in the state of Florida. We have, however, over 30 travel-associated cases reported to the CDC. A travel-related case is defined as disease contracted outside of the United States prior to arrival in Florida. While only 3 of the patients with travel-related Zika diagnosed in Florida have been pregnant, we have identified several other pregnant women who have antibodies to Zika from infection in other countries. We are working with health care professionals to ensure that all patients with Zika-related issues are receiving the care they need as directed by CDC guidance.

Zika is not an obvious illness. It has mild symptoms and only one in five people infected with the virus even experiences symptoms. Signs of Zika are similar a mild flu and include low-grade fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes, and body aches. No specific treatment exists for the virus, so symptom relief is the focus. Severe cases requiring hospitalization are uncommon and illness typically resolves within a week.

The main concern with the Zika virus is its potential effect on pregnant mothers and unborn babies. Zika virus infection during pregnancy is associated with loss of pregnancy and birth defects such as microcephaly, a condition where a baby is born with an underdeveloped brain. The virus is also associated with certain neurological disorders in adults including Guillain-Barre Syndrome. People older than 50 are most at risk. Again, it is unclear whether Zika causes these health issues. CDC and WHO research teams in Central and South America are working to find answers.

We are fortunate to have a state public health laboratory system in place that has plenty of tests for the Zika virus. With CDC guidelines, our department is closely monitoring imported cases.

A critical step for prevention and containment of Zika is mosquito control. We continuously run a robust mosquito-borne illness surveillance system and we are partnered with the CDC, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and local county mosquito control boards to ensure that we are taking proper precautions to protect residents and visitors.

Florida residents have an important role in mosquito control efforts. This particular mosquito likes to live around our homes and dwellings. “Drain and cover” is the way to remember the steps that you need to take for mosquito control where you live: eliminate any sources of standing water where the mosquito can breed, use mosquito repellent in the morning and evening and cover up with proper clothing, and be sure that screens are in place and intact over your windows and doors.

Our history as a department has prepared us to address this issue. In the past, containing other mosquito-borne illnesses with appropriate public health messages and readiness has been very successful. For example, dengue is a virus transmitted by the same mosquito and has been contained in Florida. This virus was eliminated from the continental United States decades ago and since then, a small number of travel-related cases are reported each year.



I want to assure you that preventing mosquito-borne illnesses is a priority for our department, and we are here to respond to any concerns you might have about health risks. We respect this virus and our continuing preparation will ensure that residents and visitors in Florida remain protected as we've demonstrated time and time again.

For further information on Zika and mosquito borne-illness, please visit our website at [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov) or call the Zika Virus Information Hotline at 855-622-6735. 🌳

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