

Don't let the Zika Virus Ruin Your Summer

Summer is here and mosquitoes are joining us at the cookout, in the garden, and at the softball game. The Zika virus has been much in the news recently. Do we need to worry about it in Adams County?

While a newcomer to the western-hemisphere, the Zika virus has been known about for some time. It was first discovered in 1947 and is named after the Zika Forest in Uganda. Prior to last year, human cases were limited to tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The first confirmed human infection in Brazil was reported in May 2015 and since then it has spread rapidly through South and Central America. Because of increased reports of birth defects and Guillain-Barre syndrome in areas affected by Zika, the World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Zika virus infection is transmitted by mosquitoes, primarily by the yellow-fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, which is found in the tropics and in the southern United States. It is not known to be established in Ohio. The Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, is a close relative of the yellow-fever mosquito that is found in Ohio. There is concern that the tiger mosquito may potentially transmit the Zika virus. The virus was recently found for the first time in an Asian tiger mosquito in Mexico.

Most people infected with Zika virus won't even know they have the disease. Only 1-in-5 of those infected develop symptoms which are typically mild and include fever, rash, joint pain and muscle aches. The disease is spread between humans after a mosquito feeds on an infected person and goes on to bite someone else. There is no indication that it can be spread through casual contact, however the virus can be passed on to sexual partners after returning from travel to affected areas and developing

symptoms. The Ohio Department of Health reports that as of early June, there have been 14-cases of Zika virus infection in Ohio, all of which have been acquired outside of Ohio during travel.

While the symptoms of Zika virus infection are mild, the potential for serious neurological birth defects among women who become infected during pregnancy is of great concern. The Center for Disease Control recommends that pregnant women consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

Even though Zika virus is unlikely to become a major health risk in Adams County, mosquitoes represent a very real danger to public health. West Nile virus infection, La Crosse encephalitis, and St. Louis and Eastern Equine encephalitis are among the diseases transmitted by mosquitoes in Ohio. Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, treating clothes with permethrin and other approved insecticides, and the use of an insect repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient such as DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus can provide protection against mosquitoes when out-of-doors.

Yellow fever mosquitoes and Asian tiger mosquitoes are both container breeding mosquitoes. Removing their breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels, and changing water in birdbaths and pet dishes regularly can help keep your neighborhood mosquito free.

Contact the Adams County Health Department at 937-544-5547 for more information about reducing the risk of mosquito transmitted diseases.

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