



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Mosquito bite and other protection measures urged as two additional Zika cases reported in Alabama residents

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health reports the fourth and fifth travel-related cases of the Zika virus in Alabama residents. The positive specimens were from residents of Houston and Jefferson counties. In February and March, Zika cases were reported in residents of Morgan, Jefferson and Shelby counties.

State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said, "We will implement enhanced surveillance with these two cases. The Department's Bureau of Clinical Laboratories in Montgomery can now perform Zika testing, so we have a greater opportunity to prevent transmission of the disease because test results are received much faster. We continue to work with the medical community to identify high-risk individuals."

Enhanced surveillance means that the individuals with Zika will be asked to provide the names of their household and sexual contacts. In turn, these contacts will be asked if they have Zika symptoms. These persons will be asked to use insect repellents to prevent mosquito bites that could lead to possible disease transmission.

Zika virus is transmitted primarily through the bites of *Aedes* species mosquitoes. These mosquito species are the same ones that transmit dengue and chikungunya viruses which have also been associated with travel-related illness over the past few years. Zika virus is also spread through blood transfusion and sexual contact.

Infection with the Zika virus causes only mild symptoms in the majority of the cases, but it is now known to cause birth defects and other poor pregnancy-related outcomes if infection occurs during pregnancy.

All pregnant women with a history of travel to an area with Zika virus transmission should be evaluated. Pregnant women reporting clinical illness consistent with Zika virus disease during or within 2 weeks of travel should be tested for Zika virus infection. In addition, pregnant women without any symptoms who have traveled to Zika-affected areas should be tested for the Zika-virus between 2-12 weeks post travel.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations include the following:

- Pregnant women should not travel to Zika-affected areas.
- Men who have traveled to Zika-affected areas and have pregnant partners should abstain from sex or consistently and correctly use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy for all forms of sexual activity.
- Women diagnosed with Zika should wait eight weeks after symptoms start to attempt conception. If a man has been diagnosed with Zika, the couple should wait at least six months after symptoms begin before attempting conception

The *Aedes* mosquitoes are very aggressive biters and active during the day, though they can also bite at night. ADPH advises the public to be aware of the risks posed by the Zika virus and to take steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites, including the following:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 as directed.
- Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.

To help the public keep track of the status of Zika within the state, ADPH updates include total numbers of cases at [adph.org](http://adph.org), search Zika.