

Zika Virus – Know the Facts Before Mosquito Season

On April 19th a meeting was hosted by the South Carolina Zika Virus Forum at Midlands Technical College. A panel of health, environmental and mosquito control experts provided insight into the potential for transmission of the Zika Virus in South Carolina as well as a plan of action to prevent and control it. While this virus causes mild symptoms in adults, it is of concern to pregnant women because it is linked to miscarriage and microcephaly (small head and brain) in babies born to infected mothers. Infected males can also spread Zika to women through sexual transmission. Currently **no** reported cases of Zika have been acquired through mosquito bites in the continental United States. People now in the USA with Zika virus infection acquired it in Africa, Southeast Asia or the Pacific Islands before traveling here. However, the two types of mosquitoes that can carry the Zika virus (*Aedes Aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*) exist in South Carolina, and they bite during daylight hours. Therefore, as mosquito season is imminent, education on steps to prevent mosquito bites is a first line of defense until an effective vaccine is developed. You can find current information about the Zika virus on the Centers for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov/zika. The bullet points below have been taken from this site.

What we know

- No vaccine exists to prevent Zika virus disease.
- Prevent Zika by avoiding mosquito bites (see below).
- Mosquitoes that spread Zika virus bite mostly during the daytime.
- Mosquitoes that spread Zika virus also spread dengue and chikungunya viruses.
- Prevent sexual transmission of Zika virus by using condoms or not having sex.

Steps to prevent mosquito bites

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Take steps to [control mosquitoes inside and outside your home](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/controlling-mosquitoes-at-home.html)(<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/controlling-mosquitoes-at-home.html>).
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.
- Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered](#) insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol. Choosing an EPA-registered repellent ensures the EPA has evaluated the product for effectiveness. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breast-feeding women.
 - Always follow the product label instructions.
 - Reapply insect repellent as directed.
 - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
- To protect your child from mosquito bites:

- Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months old.
- Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol on children younger than 3 years old.
- Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs.
- Cover crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting.
- Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin.
- Adults: Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items.
 - Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last.
 - If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
 - Do NOT use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.

Even if they do not feel sick, travelers returning to the United States from an area with Zika should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks so they do not spread Zika to mosquitoes that could spread the virus to other people.