



Republic of Palau

Ministry of Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT ZIKA VIRUS CONFIRMED

The Bureau of Public Health has received laboratory confirmation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of a past Zika virus infection in a person in Palau. The case has had no recent travel history to any Zika-affected areas and is likely to have been infected in Palau. The Bureau of Public Health has initiated activities to control and prevent further spread of the Zika virus.

While we do not want to alarm the public, the Bureau urges anyone who thinks they may have been infected with Zika to seek medical attention. Zika virus infection in pregnant women has been linked to certain birth defects. Because of the increased risk to pregnant women and their unborn children, the Bureau of Public Health urges all pregnant women, regardless of the stage of their pregnancy to avoid mosquitoes and see a doctor immediately if they think they have been infected.

The Ministry of Health takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to individuals and communities that have remained vigilant in minimizing mosquito breeding grounds. Your continued efforts are thoroughly appreciated and ensure that our communities remain safe.

How Zika is spread

The Zika virus is spread to people through infected Aedes mosquitoes. This is the same mosquito that spreads dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.

Sexual transmission of the virus has also been reported. Persons who have traveled to Zika-affected areas are encouraged to abstain from sexual intercourse or to utilize condoms correctly and consistently to minimize the risk of transmission.

Symptoms

About 1 in 5 infected people infected with Zika will experience symptoms. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are **fever, rash, conjunctivitis and joint pain**. Other symptoms include **muscle pain and headache**. People usually do not get sick enough to go to the hospital. If you experience these symptoms, you are encouraged to seek medical attention.

Preventive Measures

Mosquitoes and their breeding sites pose a significant risk for Zika virus infection. Prevention and control relies on reducing mosquitoes through source reduction (removal and modification of breeding sites) and reducing contact between mosquitoes and people. This can be done by using

insect repellent; wearing clothes (preferably light-colored) that cover as much of the body as possible; using physical barriers such as screens, closed doors and windows; and sleeping under mosquito nets. It is also important to empty, clean or cover containers that can hold water such as buckets, flower pots or tires and other places where mosquitoes can.

If you experience any of the symptoms listed above or for more information about Zika Virus Disease, please contact the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) Clinic at 488-3117 or 488-2450.

For more information on how to stop the breeding of mosquitoes, contact the Division of Environmental Health at 488-6073 or 488-6345.



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Ministry of Health