



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Idaho Public Health Districts

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June 2016

ZIKA: A GROWING PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN

The Zika virus is a newly emerging mosquito-borne disease in the Western Hemisphere and it spreads to people primarily through the bite of infected mosquitoes-- *Aedes (aegypti and albopictus)*. These two species of mosquitoes are not native to Idaho.

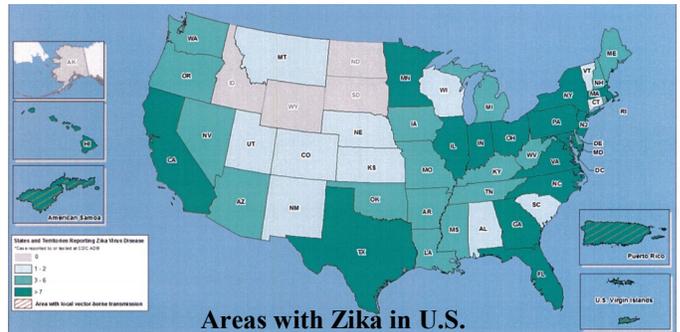
With the recent outbreaks in the Americas, the virus—like West Nile—is an important public health concern. To date, Zika has not spread by mosquitoes to humans in the continental United States, although lab tests have confirmed the virus in travelers returning to the U. S. and in some non-travelers who got Zika through sex with an infected traveler. Wyoming is currently Idaho's only contiguous state that does not have a confirmed case. (See map [Areas with Zika: U.S.](#))

It is known that everyone—regardless of gender or age—is at risk if bitten by a mosquito carrying the disease. However, based on current data, the greatest risk for complications from Zika is to a pregnant woman's fetus. If a pregnant woman is infected with Zika, she can pass the virus to her fetus. Zika has been linked to cases of microcephaly and other serious birth defects.

Microcephaly is a birth defect where a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age. Babies with microcephaly often have smaller brains that may not have developed properly. Recent studies have also shown evidence that the virus can be transmitted through unprotected sex by an infected man to his female or male partners.

Like West Nile, most people infected with Zika don't even know they are infected. Approximately 20% of cases experience mild symptoms, such as fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes for up to a week. At this time, there is no vaccine or medicine for the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is not able to predict how the Zika virus will spread in the continental U.S. The most recent maps reinforce the fact that while mosquitoes carrying Zika are not native to Idaho, Idahoans don't need to travel far to be at risk. (See map: Estimated range of *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in the U. S.)



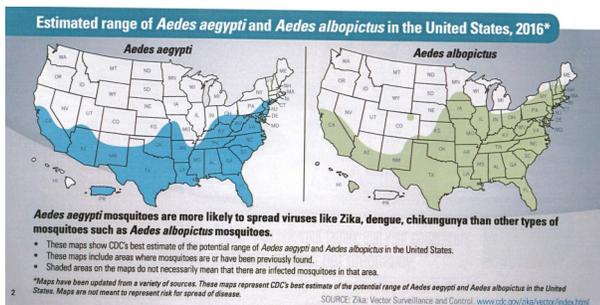
Areas with Zika in U.S.

In addition, with the recent outbreaks, the number of Zika cases among travelers visiting or returning to the United States will likely increase and could result in the local spread of the virus by later this summer.

If you travel to areas where these mosquitoes exist, the best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your family from their bites.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Eliminate standing water inside and outside your home
- Stay in air-conditioned facilities with window and door screens that keep mosquitoes outside
- Treat your clothing and gear with permethrin or buy pre-treated items
- Use EPA-registered insect repellants
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioning or functioning window screens are not available
- Work together to reduce mosquito populations

Many unknowns exist about the disease and its long-term health effects. One concern, mosquito experts have specifically, is whether or not Idaho's native species have the capacity to transmit the Zika virus.



Since West Nile has existed in Idaho, the health districts and mosquito abatement districts have established strong partnerships—demonstrating one example of how public health engages the community to identify and solve health problems with mosquito-borne illnesses. As long as the threat of mosquito-borne diseases remain, these entities across the state will continue to strengthen strategies to *Fight the Bite* in Idaho and reduce mosquito populations. Currently there are 23 mosquito abatement districts in 17 Idaho counties. For updated information about areas with Zika, go to www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html.

HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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