

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency Urges Caution to Spring Break Travelers Because of Zika Concerns

COLDWATER, MI. Spring break is the time of the year when many in the tri-county area residents choose to travel and make memories with their friends, families, or loved ones. Unfortunately, this year, many of the foreign destinations favored by sun seekers are also those areas that are affected by the Zika virus. Because of the potential link between Zika and birth defects, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is urging pregnant women in any trimester to reconsider travel to those areas. Anyone travelling to an affected area is urged to take precautions against mosquito bites.

The Zika virus is spread primarily by the bite of an infected mosquito. The disease has not been found in mosquitoes in the United States, but has been found in Puerto Rico, Mexico and much of Central and South America. [\(SEE MAP\)](#). The most common symptoms of Zika are mild and may include a fever, rash, joint pain and red itchy eyes. These symptoms usually last just a few days. The virus can also be spread sexually from infected men. Most people who get the virus will never experience any symptoms. Currently, no vaccine or is available for the Zika virus. “For the people who are travelling in those areas, avoiding mosquito bites as the best prevention against this virus,” said Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the tri-county agency. “We encourage women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant to consider postponing their trips out of an abundance of caution. Anyone who has travelled to one of these areas and experiences symptoms either while on the trip or within about a week of being home should contact their doctor.”

The CDC recommends using mosquito repellants that contain DEET or other [EPA approved repellants](#). Use only as directed and reapply often. Dress in long, loose

and light colored clothes while outside, especially during the day. The mosquito that spreads Zika is an aggressive day biter. Travelers going to an affected area can further protect themselves by choosing lodging with air conditioning or screens to keep mosquitoes out and by staying indoors during daylight hours.

More Information about Zika is available on our website at www.bhsj.org or by going to <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

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