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Ohio Reporting Its First Zika Virus Case Acquired Through Sexual Transmission

Local officials increasing mosquito assessment/control measures in area

COLUMBUS – Ohio is reporting its first case of Zika virus acquired through sexual transmission in a 61-year-old Lucas County woman. Her husband traveled to a country with active Zika virus transmission and has tested positive for the virus, becoming Ohio's 15th travel-associated case. Local officials are increasing mosquito assessment and control measures in the area to reduce the risk of local mosquitoes becoming infected by biting them and spreading the virus to others.

Both new Zika virus cases bring Ohio's total confirmed cases to 16. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting that in U.S. states and the District of Columbia there are 755 travel-associated Zika virus cases, another 12 Zika cases acquired through sexual transmission, and no cases locally acquired through bites from infected mosquitoes.

"Travelers to areas with active Zika virus transmission should take precautions to prevent mosquito bites, which is the primary way you can contract the virus," said Dr. Mary DiOrio, medical director of the Ohio Department of Health. "When travelers return home, they should follow CDC guidance to prevent sexual transmission of the virus, especially pregnant women or women or may become pregnant."

CDC's guidance is based on evidence of a link between Zika virus and certain birth defects:

- Couples in which the man has confirmed Zika virus or has symptoms of the infection should wait at least six months after symptoms began before having unprotected sex. During that timeframe, the couple should consider using a condom or abstaining from sexual activity. If the woman is pregnant, this applies for the duration of the pregnancy.
- Couples in which the man travels to a Zika-affected area but returns without symptoms of the virus should consider using a condom or abstaining from sexual activity for at least eight weeks after his possible exposure.
- Couples with possible Zika virus exposure who want to try to get pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider.

"We have been preparing to make sure we are ready in case something like this happened," said David Grossman, MD, Health Commissioner of Toledo-Lucas County Public Health. "It's important to take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from mosquito bites and control the mosquito population by eliminating standing water, wearing insect repellent along with long sleeves and pants, and have intact screens on doors and windows."

While Zika virus can spread through sexual transmission, there is no indication that it can spread from person to person through casual contact.

Of people infected with the Zika virus, 80 percent do not have any symptoms. When symptoms occur, they are often mild, lasting from several days to a week, and include fever, rash, joint and muscle pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), and headache. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. However, there is an association between Zika virus and certain birth defects.

State and local public health officials in Ohio have been preparing since January for Zika virus, making sure that mosquito control efforts were in place for mosquito season, and conducting a public awareness campaign to raise awareness about the virus and the importance of preventing mosquito-borne and sexual transmission of the virus.

For more information about the Zika virus including sexual transmission, go to www.odh.ohio.gov.

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