

**Fiji Ministry of Health & Medical Services Travel Advice**

**6<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

As of **1<sup>st</sup> April 2016**, there have been **13** laboratory confirmed cases of Zika virus infection reported to the Ministry of Health. With support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners, the MOHMS has strengthened surveillance and public health measures to prevent and control Zika virus transmission.

The Ministry of Health recommends that travellers to Fiji protect themselves from mosquito bites, especially day-biting mosquitoes and take precautionary measures.

Based on the latest evidence that Zika virus infection during pregnancy may be linked to microcephaly in newborns, pregnant women planning to travel to Fiji, should discuss their travel plans with their health care provider.

There is no treatment or vaccine currently available for Zika virus. All travellers, including pregnant women, should adhere closely to measures that can prevent mosquito bites during the trip. Travellers are advised to:

- use insect repellent: repellents may be applied to exposed skin or to clothing, and should contain DEET or Icaridin. Repellents must be used in strict accordance with the label instructions;
- wear clothes (preferably light-coloured) that cover as much of the body as possible;
- The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito are capable of biting anyone throughout the day
- use physical barriers such as screens, closed doors and windows;
- sleep under mosquito nets, especially during the day, when Aedes mosquitoes are most active; and
- Identify and report potential mosquito breeding sites to relevant authorities. You can do your part by emptying, cleaning or covering containers that can hold even small amounts of water, such as buckets, vases, flower pots and tyres.

Based on available evidence, WHO does not recommend any travel or trade restrictions related to Zika virus disease.

**What is Zika virus disease?**

Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes. These mosquitoes bite mainly during the daytime. Common symptoms are fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, and headache. These symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days.

**What are potential complications of Zika virus disease?**

During large outbreaks in French Polynesia and Brazil in 2013 and 2015 respectively, national health authorities reported potential neurological and auto-immune complications of Zika virus disease. Recently in Brazil, local health authorities have observed an increase in Guillain-Barré syndrome which coincided with Zika virus infections in the general public, as well as an increase in babies born with microcephaly in northeast Brazil. Agencies investigating the Zika outbreaks are finding an increasing body of evidence about the link between Zika virus and microcephaly. However, more investigation is needed to better understand the

potential link between Zika and microcephaly and, Zika and Guillain-Barré syndrome. Other potential causes are also being investigated.

#### **Public health control measures undertaken**

The following public health response and control measures are ongoing in Fiji:

- Enhancing surveillance of Zika virus and potential complications with support from WHO and other development partners;
- Raising public awareness of Zika virus disease and promoting personal protection measures through a multi-media health promotion campaign on prevention and control of Zika virus disease and the reduction of mosquito breeding sites;
- Identifying and destroying potential mosquito breeding sites through a multi-sector Integrated Vector Control Program and national clean-up campaign;
- Taking measures to prevent mosquitoes breeding in water storage containers, flower vases, tyres etc;
- Minimizing transmission of Zika virus and limiting potential complication of Zika virus infections by implementing a National Zika Virus Action Plan including five priority areas - coordination, surveillance, clinical management, vector control, and public health risk communication especially targeting pregnant women and women of child-bearing age.

#### **What should you do if you think you have symptoms of Zika virus in Fiji?**

If you have symptoms consistent with Zika virus, ensure rest, hydration, use only Paracetamol for pain or fever, and sleep under a mosquito net or in a screened house to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes which will cause further spread of infection. If symptoms worsen, you should consult a medical practitioner or the nearest health facility.

#### **After travel:**

If you think you have symptoms of Zika virus disease, you should see a doctor or visit your nearest health facility. Until more is known about the risk of sexual transmission, all men and women upon returning from travel to Zika affected country - especially pregnant women and their partners - should practice safe sex, including through the correct and consistent use of condoms.

#### **Further information on Zika virus can be obtained from:**

<http://www.health.gov.fj/?s=zika>

<http://www.who.int/features/qa/zika/en/>