

Media Release

24th March 2016

Health: Zika

The Ministry of Health & Medical Services continues to work proactively to address mosquito borne diseases and intervene to minimize the possibility of outbreaks.

As of 24th March 2016, **3 zika cases** have been confirmed -1 in the western division and 2 in the central division.

The Hon. Minister for Health & Medical Services Mr Jone Usamate said that the cases have been investigated and a rapid survey of mosquito density within the case area was carried out.

The Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted by the *aedes* mosquito, the same species which spreads dengue and chikungunya. Zika virus usually causes mild illness; with symptoms appearing a few days after a person is bitten by an infected mosquito. Most people with Zika virus disease will get a slight fever, rash, muscle and joint pain, and feel tired. The symptoms usually subside within 1-2 weeks.

“Our environmental health team has carried out awareness and information on zika at these houses. Spraying was also done in these areas on Friday”.

“We are fortunate that there is **no outbreak of Zika virus in Fiji**. I must commend our team that had put together a Zika action plan earlier this year which has allowed for such timely preparedness and response” Mr Usamate said.

This action plan has been put together in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), DFAT through Fiji Health Sector Support Program (FHSSP), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australian Government, UNICEF, and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

“We continue to intensify surveillance activities for testing suspected cases, considering that Fiji is a hub for trade and travel in the region”, Mr Usamate added.

The public is urged to adhere to health advises on taking necessary preventative measures.

The best protection from Zika virus is to prevent mosquito bites. Preventing mosquito bites will protect people from Zika virus, as well as other diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes such as dengue and chikungunya. Pregnant women should also protect themselves from being bitten by mosquitos.

Mr Usamate said, “Destroying mosquito breeding places is important and this requires everyone’s effort and not just the Ministry or Government’s”.

Use insect repellent; wearing clothes (preferably light-coloured) 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 even small amounts of water such as buckets, flower pots or tyres, so that places where mosquitoes can breed are removed.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry's vector control, border control and Centre for Communicable disease will continue to be vigilant and alert on patients who present to medical practitioners with similar symptoms to Zika virus.

Any further information about Zika can be obtained from the Ministry of Health & Medical Services.