



# MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Spring break travelers encouraged to take precautions against mosquito-borne disease

*Knoxville, Tenn.* — With many community members making plans for spring and summer vacations and mission trips to warmer climates, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is encouraging travelers to take precautions against mosquito-borne disease. These diseases, including chikungunya, dengue and Zika, are transmitted year-round in some areas because their climates are continuously conducive to mosquito habitats. Mosquitoes can contract these viruses when they feed on an infected person and then spread the disease to others through bites.

“When traveling, people should be aware of the infectious diseases in the country or region through which they are traveling and take appropriate precautions; this includes protecting yourself from mosquito bites,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “Unfortunately, we do not have a vaccine for chikungunya, dengue or Zika, which is why awareness and preparation prior to travel are so important.”

### What to know before you go:

- The affected areas/countries can change. Stay up to date on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s travel recommendations by visiting <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. In addition to the Caribbean and South America, local transmission of Zika has been found in Florida and Texas; chikungunya has been locally transmitted in Florida. Although dengue rarely occurs in the continental U.S., it is endemic in Puerto Rico and in many tourist destinations in Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.
- Since there is no vaccine to prevent chikungunya, dengue or Zika, avoiding mosquito bites is the best protection.
- The mosquitoes that spread disease can bite during the day or at night.
- Mosquito repellants containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 are recommended.
- Pregnant women should avoid traveling to areas with Zika. A map of these areas can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>
- Zika can also be transmitted through sexual activity. With proper use, condoms can reduce the chance of getting Zika from sex.
- If you or your partner are [trying to get pregnant](#), consider avoiding nonessential travel to areas with Zika. And, be sure to talk to your health care provider about your travel plans.

### What to do while you’re there:

- Use mosquito repellants.
- Wear permethrin-treated clothing. Some permethrin products may also be used on shoes, bed nets and camping gear. Permethrin is not to be used directly on skin.
- Do not use perfume, cologne or other scented products when outside.

- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants if possible.
- Empty standing water from outdoor containers.
- Use air conditioning and keep windows and doors closed or covered with screens.
- Use a bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors.

#### **What to be aware of when you get back:**

- To avoid spreading disease once you come home, protect yourself from mosquito bites for three weeks.
- If you feel sick after your return from your trip, seek medical care and tell your provider about your recent travel.
- With chikungunya, symptoms usually begin three to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms include fever and joint pain. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling or rash.
- With Zika, symptoms typically begin three to 12 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes).
- Protect yourself and your partner during sex, especially if your partner traveled to an area with Zika or if you are pregnant or considering getting pregnant. The amount of time you need to protect yourself during sex depends on whether your partner has symptoms and whether you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant. For specific guidelines, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-during-sex.html>
- The primary symptoms of dengue fever are high fever, severe headache, severe pain behind the eyes, joint pain, muscle and bone pain, rash, and mild bleeding (e.g., nose or gums bleed, easy bruising). Symptoms can take up to two weeks to develop.

Many people infected with Zika virus won't have symptoms or will only have mild symptoms that last from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon; however, there is a link between Zika virus infection in pregnant women and subsequent birth defects. More information about this can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/index.html>

More information about chikungunya is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>. Details about dengue may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/dengue/>.

#### **About the Knox County Health Department**

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

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