



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 28, 2017

Contact: Rebecca Lynch, PIO, 907-269-34955, cell 907-351-7269, rebecca.lynch@alaska.gov

Alaska resident contracts Zika virus while out of state

State Public Health official says there is no risk of virus transmission to general public

ANCHORAGE -- The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services has confirmed that an Alaska resident who recently travelled to Central America, where Zika virus is prevalent, has tested positive for the virus after returning to Alaska.

Dr. Jay Butler, Director of Public Health and Chief Medical Officer for Alaska, says Alaskans can rest assured they are in no danger of contracting the virus from mosquitos here.

“The Zika virus cannot be spread between humans through casual contact and is transmitted only by two species of mosquitos native to warmer climates that do not live here in Alaska,” he said. “This patient is not pregnant, so there is also no concern about birth defects in this instance.”

Alaska has previously seen two cases of Zika: In 2007 a Zika case was confirmed in an Alaskan who had traveled to Micronesia, and another case diagnosed in Alaska in 2016 was a tourist who traveled here directly from Central America.

Alaskans who are planning travel to areas where Zika virus is active should take some basic precautions to avoid contracting and transmitting the virus. These include: using insect repellent; wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts; sleeping under a mosquito net; screening or closing windows; and removing any standing water in the area where they are sleeping to discourage mosquito breeding.

For the latest information before you travel visit the DHSS website at:
dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/Zika.aspx

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