



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH News Release

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van T. Mitchell, Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Washington County Health Department to Hold Zika Awareness Events *Activities geared toward preventing infection from mosquito bites, human contact*

Baltimore, MD (April 22, 2016) – In accordance with Maryland Governor Larry Hogan’s proclamation of April 24-30 as Maryland Zika Awareness Week, the Washington County health department will be hosting a series of activities to equip residents with information to help minimize their risk for the mosquito-borne virus, as weather becomes warmer.

“Our activities will be centered around helping our residents make sure that they don’t provide places and opportunities around their homes for mosquitoes to breed,” said county health officer Earl Stoner.

Zika Awareness Week is part of Maryland’s effort to raise awareness about the virus and about prevention. Throughout this week and the coming months, local health departments throughout the state will be scheduling activities in their respective communities.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have stated – because transmission has chiefly occurred through the bite of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito – that preventing mosquito bites is the best way to prevent infection.

The CDC also has confirmed that people who have traveled to countries where the virus is actively transmitted (the Caribbean, Central American and South American countries) should abstain from unprotected sexual activity, especially if their partner is a woman who is pregnant or who could become pregnant. For more information on prevention steps, visit the CDC’s Zika prevention web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/protect-yourself.html>.

As of today, Maryland has had nine confirmed cases of Zika virus infection. All have been related to travel from areas of ongoing transmission; none have involved local transmission.

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Washington County Health Department Zika awareness activities will include:

- Awareness week press release
- Awareness and prevention articles and ongoing press releases throughout the vector season
- Demonstration of appropriate prevention measures for yards, etc.
- Distribution of Zika kits to local OB/GYNs, Family Med., and Federally Qualified Health Centers – each kit will contain CDC Zika prevention printed information (in English and Spanish), 1 can of insect repellent, 1 pack of mosquito larvicide dunks, 2 condoms
- Messages displayed on the electronic sign in front of our main building
- Awareness materials, alerts, and resources distributed and posted on the Health Department's website – <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/washhealth/Pages/home.aspx>
- Host an anticipated town hall informational meeting with Maryland's Deputy Secretary for Health and Mental Hygiene, Howard Haft, MD, in June

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene keeps a record of confirmed human cases on its website: <http://goo.gl/oAqPF6>. For more information about the Zika virus, visit the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

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The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is the state government agency that protects Maryland's public health. We work together to promote and improve the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management, and community engagement.

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