



# SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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## **Travelers Reminded to Take Precautions to Prevent Zika**

*Local Transmission Confirmed in Ensenada, Mexico*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reminds winter travelers to protect themselves from mosquito bites when traveling to areas with known transmission of Zika virus, including Mexico. Mexican officials this week confirmed a case of local transmission in Ensenada, Baja California, a coastal city in Mexico. Ensenada is approximately 85 miles south of San Diego, making it a popular destination for California travelers. “Many Californians enjoy spending time in Mexico, and this news about local transmission just across the border emphasizes the importance for travelers to take precautions against mosquito bites,” said CDPH Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith. “In particular, pregnant women and couples considering pregnancy need to be cautious because Zika virus can cause severe birth defects. Pregnant women are urged to avoid travel to areas with known Zika transmission if at all possible. If travel is necessary, it is extremely important to prevent mosquito bites by using mosquito repellents and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.”

Many areas of Mexico continue to experience transmission of the Zika virus, including states with popular tourist destinations. In addition to Baja California, the states of Baja California Sur, where Cabo San Lucas is located, and Sonora, which borders Arizona, have also reported local Zika virus transmission. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers any travel to Mexico to be a potential risk for Zika virus infection. While there has been no local transmission of Zika virus in California to date, CDPH has confirmed 486 cases of travel-associated infections in the state. Florida and Texas have experienced locally transmitted cases of Zika. Zika virus is spread primarily through mosquito bites and can also be transmitted by both men and women during sex. Most people who are infected with Zika do not experience any symptoms, but should take precautions to avoid sexual transmission, even if they never had symptoms. All individuals, particularly women of childbearing age, should take steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites while traveling and



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when they return home. Sexually active people who travel to areas with Zika transmission should use condoms or other barriers to avoid getting or passing Zika during sex. Couples planning pregnancy when either partner has been exposed to Zika virus should speak with a health care provider about a safe time to try to get pregnant. Health care providers can recommend effective birth control methods to use while waiting to conceive. Men should wait six months to conceive a child with a partner after Zika exposure. Women who have been exposed should wait a minimum of eight weeks before becoming pregnant. The mosquitoes that can carry Zika virus and infect people live in many areas of California. "To protect others from the Zika virus, we ask people traveling to Mexico, or any other place where Zika exists, to take steps to prevent mosquito bites for three weeks after a trip, even if you don't feel sick," said Dr. Smith. "If one of these mosquitoes bites an infected person, it can spread the virus by biting another person."

To prevent mosquito bites, apply repellents containing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-registered ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label). When used as directed, these repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women. In addition to long-sleeved shirts and long pants, individuals should wear socks and shoes when outdoors. Be sure window and door screens are in good condition to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home. Though most people who are infected with Zika do not experience any symptoms, symptoms of infection can include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for Zika other than rest, fluids and fever relief. More information about Zika can be found in the February 2017 CDPH Health and Travel Advisory and on the CDPH and CDC websites. In addition, the Mexico Ministry of Health website contains more Zika-related information.

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