

Aug. 30, 2016

Dear University System of Georgia Campus Community,

With the start of fall semester, I want to share important information about Zika virus disease. There are steps you can take to protect yourself and help prevent the spread of Zika in Georgia.

To date, there are no locally transmitted Zika cases in Georgia, which means Zika has not been spread by mosquitoes in the state. There are, however, about 70 cases of Zika in Georgia that are **related to travel** in South and Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico. Zika **has** been transmitted locally in Florida in the Miami-Dade area and reinforces the need for ongoing mosquito control and prevention of mosquito bites.

Zika virus is transmitted primarily through the bite of infected *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. Both types of mosquitoes can be found in Georgia. Transmission occurs when a mosquito bites an infected individual and then that mosquito bites another individual and passes on the infection. Zika can also be spread by a man or woman through unprotected sex.

Zika is known to cause a serious birth defect – microcephaly - when it is passed from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. Microcephaly causes smaller than normal head size and poor brain development in babies. Zika is also linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) in children and adults following Zika infection.

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika. Symptoms of Zika virus infection include fever, rash, joint pain or red eyes. If you are experiencing these symptoms or have recently experienced them, please see your health care provider, campus health clinic or local department of public health office as soon as possible. However, most people with Zika virus never know they are infected, so **everyone** is advised to protect themselves from Zika and mosquito bites:

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks for outdoor activities (mosquitoes that transmit Zika are daytime biters)
- Use permethrin to treat clothing
- Make sure doors and windows fit tightly and screens are in good repair
- Empty or properly discard containers that hold standing water around your dorm, apartment or house – mosquitoes will breed in something as small as a bottle cap if there's water in it
- If you are traveling, check [CDC travel advisories](#) for countries with Zika transmission (pregnant women should not travel to locations with on-going Zika transmission)



- Use condoms for all sexual activity if either partner may have Zika or may have been exposed to Zika

Additional Zika information can be found on the Georgia Department of Public Health's website dph.ga.gov, including the number of travel-related cases of Zika in Georgia, the counties of residence and links to the latest information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brenda Fitzgerald" followed by a small flourish.

Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D.
Commissioner and State Health Officer