CSB Students,

With spring break quickly approaching, we want to make sure that those of you who plan to travel have accurate information regarding the Zika virus.

The Zika virus is spread by mosquitos and is therefore most prevalent in tropical environments. In January 2016, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a travel alert for countries where Zika virus is prevalent, which includes areas of South America, all of Central America, the Caribbean, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and Cape Verde.

It is estimated that 80% of those infected with Zika virus are without symptoms. The remaining 20% usually experience mild symptoms including fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent Zika or medication to treat it.

Travelers to high risk areas can limit their exposure to Zika (and other mosquito-borne illnesses) by taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

Currently, the main health concern is that Zika may be linked to a specific birth defect called microcephaly. The link is so strong that the CDC issued a travel guidance for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant, warning them to avoid visiting places where the virus is currently circulating. Such travelers should regularly review the travel alerts for updates as more countries are likely to be added to the list.

On February 5, 2016, the CDC issued guidance for male travelers who are concerned about potential exposure of Zika to female partners, particularly those who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. They should review the CDC’s Interim Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Transmission of Zika.

If you are concerned about a risk or exposures to Zika related to upcoming travel, you may contact CSB Health Services to schedule a travel consult at 320-363-5605 or contact a specialist in travel medicine. Pregnant women or women planning to become pregnant in near future, should consult with their OB/GYN.

More information about Zika can be found at www.cdc.gov/zika.

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