



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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For Immediate Release
February 12, 2016

Travellers: take precautions against Zika Virus

Many of us from Northwestern Ontario have travelled to or plan to travel to Central and South America, the Caribbean or Mexico this 2015-2016 winter season.

According to the *Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)* there have been confirmed travel-related cases of Zika virus infection in Canadian travellers.

Zika virus is transmitted by infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. Most people do not even know they are infected with only 20-25 % of people developing symptoms. There is some evidence that the virus can be transmitted through sexual activity.

The *World Health Organization (WHO)* and the *Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)* advise:

Recommendations to all travellers:

- Use personal protective measures against mosquito bites.
 - Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts, long pants and closed shoes
 - use DEET insect repellent- 20-30% is safe in adults, 20% in children
 - use window and door screens and bed nets
 - wear permethrin treated clothing and gear

Recommendations to pregnant women and those who intend to get pregnant:

- Discuss their travel plans with their Health Care Provider and consider postponing travel to areas in the Americas affected by the Zika virus outbreak.
- Women wishing to become pregnant should wait at least two months after their return from an affected area before trying to conceive.
- Women who are pregnant should consider the use of condoms for the duration of the pregnancy if their partner has travelled to affected areas.

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Recommendations to men (who have travelled to an area with widespread transmission):

- Use condoms with any partner who is or could become pregnant for 2 months after their return. Until more is known, consider the use of condoms for the duration of pregnancy.

For an up-to-date list of affected countries visit <http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/zika-virus-infection/en/> , or call your local Northwestern Health Unit office. Our staff offers travel health information services, including 3 Public Health Nurses who each hold a Certificate in Travel Health®.

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