

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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Contact: Myra Stoney, Director or Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223

## Be Safe When Travelling Abroad, Prepare for Zika

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) highly encourages residents when planning travel outside of the United States to review recommended shots and preventative actions by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “SWNPHD offers several shots that can help travelers stay safe from diseases not common in the United States,” explains Melissa Propp, RN, SWNPHD Surveillance Nurse. “You can call me at 308-345-4223 or go directly to the CDC website to investigate the countries you will be in and health concerns of those areas at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>.”

Visiting warm locations during the winter, mission trips with church groups, cruises and spring break are just a few of the reasons that you may be travelling outside of the United States. “Planning ahead is the best advice we have for those going abroad,” states Myra Stoney, SWNPHD Director. “With the recent confirmation of two Nebraska residents obtaining the Zika virus through their travels, we want people to know precautions that keep them safe.” An example is to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites that can cause diseases like Chikungunya, Dengue, Zika, and Malaria. CDC has specific recommendations:

- Choose a hotel or lodging with air conditioning or screens on windows and doors.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are outside or in a room that is not well screened.
- Buy a bed net at your local outdoor store or online before traveling overseas.
- Permethrin-treated bed nets provide more protection than untreated nets.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing. Treat clothes with permethrin or another EPA registered insecticide for extra protection.
- Bring EPA registered insect repellent with you.
- Reapply insect repellent every few hours and do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.

SWNPHD encourages any resident that begins to experience signs or symptoms upon return to the United States to contact their healthcare provider and give specific information about their recent travels. The most common symptoms of Zika virus are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Healthcare providers will contact SWNPHD to approve testing for the Zika virus. Only about one in five people infected with the mosquito-borne virus will get sick and their illness is usually mild. Of highest concern are pregnant women who may contract the virus which possibly leads to birth defects.

As you prepare for your travel abroad, take a moment to plan and prepare. For more information call Myra Stoney or Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223 or email [nurse@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:nurse@swhealth.ne.gov). SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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