

ZIKA VIRUS ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON STATE

OKANOGAN COUNTY, Wash. – February 29, 2016 – The Zika virus, spread by mosquito bites and not believed to be highly contagious, may have arrived in Okanogan County.

According to the Sunday, Feb. 28 edition of *The Omak-Okanogan County Chronicle*, Public Health Director Lauri Jones stated that three people are being tested for Zika. The story can be found here: <http://www.omakchronicle.com/news/2016/feb/28/county-waits-test-results-possible-zika-virus-case/>.

The Washington State Department of Health reported last week that a Mason County man who recently traveled to the South Pacific tested positive for the mosquito-borne virus.

“The good news is this virus spreads through the bite of a type of mosquito we don’t have in Washington state, so it is very unlikely that this virus would spread widely here,” said Dr. Scott Lindquist, State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases for the Department of Health.

Three Rivers Hospital’s Ancillary Manager and Infection Preventionist, Jeremy Vandelac, has shared some facts about the virus:

- Zika is not known to be spread by human to human contact. However, cases have been reported where the virus was been passed via unprotected intercourse.
- It’s important to know that the virus only causes 1 in 5 people to become ill; the symptoms are very mild and mimic the flu with some rash, fever, joint pain and conjunctivitis. It is rare that people get sick enough to be hospitalized and very rare that death occurs.
- The main concern is with pregnancy, as the virus has been shown to spread from mother to their babies and cause birth defects. Pregnant women are urged to delay travel to other countries and take extra precaution to protect themselves from mosquito bites.
- Treatment is very similar to flu or common illness: rest, hydrate, and medicate to reduce fever. A vaccine has not yet been established to prevent infection, but the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is finding that once an individual is infected, they are protected from future infections.
- Protect yourself and your loved ones from mosquito bites by wearing long sleeves and pants, removing standing water or breeding grounds on your property, using DEET or other EPA-registered insect repellants, staying indoors, and/or using permethrin to treat clothing.

Anyone who displays symptoms of Zika should consult their primary health care provider.

Please visit the CDC’s page about the Zika virus for more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

###