



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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International travelers encouraged to take precautions against vaccine preventable and mosquito-borne disease

Knoxville, Tenn. — With many community members making plans for spring and summer vacations and mission trips abroad, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is encouraging travelers to take precautions against vaccine preventable and mosquito-borne disease.

“When traveling, everyone should be aware of the infectious diseases in the regions they are visiting and take appropriate precautions, including getting recommended vaccinations and protecting yourself from mosquito bites,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “Unfortunately, we do not have a vaccine for chikungunya, dengue or Zika, which is why awareness and preparation prior to travel are so important.”

International travelers are encouraged to visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) travel web page at cdc.gov/travel well in advance of a trip to familiarize themselves with any infectious diseases prevalent in or warnings for the areas they plan to visit. Immunization against diseases common in foreign countries but not in the U.S., such as typhoid fever, are recommended, and in the case of yellow fever, immunization is required. International travel vaccinations are available in KCHD’s Travel and Immunization Clinic, located at 140 Dameron Ave. Appointments, made by calling 865-215-5070, should be scheduled four to six weeks prior to departure.

Mosquito-borne diseases, including chikungunya, dengue and Zika, are transmitted year-round in some areas because their climates are continuously conducive to mosquito habitats. Mosquitoes can contract these viruses when they feed on an infected person and then spread the disease to others through bites. More information about mosquito-borne diseases, including symptoms, is available at cdc.gov.

What to know before you go:

- Infectious diseases in countries/regions can change. Stay up to date on all the CDC’s travel recommendations by visiting cdc.gov/travel.
- To allow for full immunization, schedule appointments for any needed vaccinations at least four to six weeks prior to departure.
- Since there is no vaccine to prevent chikungunya, dengue or Zika, avoiding mosquito bites is the best protection.
- The mosquitoes that spread disease can bite during the day or at night.
- Pack an Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellent with one of the following ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol or 2-undecanone.
- Pregnant women should avoid traveling to areas with Zika. A map of these areas can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>.
- If you or your partner are [trying to get pregnant](#), consider avoiding nonessential travel to areas with Zika. And, talk to your health care provider about your travel plans.

What to do while you are there:

- Follow any country-specific precautions issued by the CDC, such as food or water warnings.
- Use mosquito repellants.
- Wear permethrin-treated clothing. Some permethrin products may also be used on shoes, bed nets and camping gear. Permethrin is not to be used directly on skin.
- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants if possible.
- Empty standing water from outdoor containers.
- Use air conditioning and keep windows and doors closed or covered with screens. Use a bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors.

What to be aware of when you get back:

- If you feel sick after your return from your trip, seek medical care and tell your health care provider about your recent travel.
- To avoid spreading disease once you come home, protect yourself from mosquito bites for three weeks.
- Protect yourself and your partner during sex, especially if your partner traveled to an area with Zika or if you are pregnant or considering getting pregnant. For specific guidelines, visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-during-sex.html>

About the Knox County Health Department

As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. KCHD investigates disease outbreaks, identifies community health threats, conducts extensive outreach and education, provides and connects the public with medical care, prepares for public health emergencies, enforces food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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