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**DEPUTY MAYOR PALACIO, HEALTH COMMISSIONER BASSETT UPDATE NEW YORKERS
ON CITY'S RESPONSE TO ZIKA VIRUS**

There are three reported cases in New York City

NEW YORK—Deputy Mayor Dr. Herminia Palacio and Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett today provided an update on the City's response to Zika Virus, detailing several steps the Health Department taking to protect New Yorkers. Three individuals with Zika virus have been identified in New York City, including one pregnant woman. All of the patients are adults who were infected while traveling in affected areas outside New York, and none are experiencing severe complications.

Mosquitoes are not active during cold weather months. At this time, no risk of acquiring Zika virus exists in New York City. The mosquito responsible for transmission in impacted areas in Latin America is the *Aedes aegypti*, which is a mosquito species not found in New York City.

“Though mosquitoes are not currently active in New York City, we have already started a comprehensive response to Zika virus,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio**. “We want to ensure all New Yorkers traveling to warmer climates are taking preventive measures, and we are prepared as mosquito season approaches.”

“During the winter months many New Yorkers travel to areas of the globe where Zika Virus is currently circulating, and we strongly recommend that any pregnant women delay travel to the areas affected by the virus, and we urge any pregnant women returning from these areas to speak with their physician,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**.

Steps the Health Department is taking to protect New Yorkers include:

- Reminding physicians to promptly report cases identified to the Health Department.
- Increasing surveillance to identify mosquito species that might be capable of harboring Zika virus as the mosquito season approaches.
- During mosquito season, which typically starts in April, the agency will build upon its comprehensive West Nile Virus mosquito control infrastructure and strategy to enhance control for the *Aedes* mosquitoes, which in Latin America may carry Zika.
- Convening experts who focus on clinical implications of the virus and mosquito control strategies – including health experts in Southern States and the Caribbean – to look at their existing plans.

- Increasing awareness of the disease through direct communication with physicians, providers, elected officials and community based organizations. The agency is also planning a public awareness campaign focusing on how New Yorkers can protect themselves from mosquitos and take precautions while traveling.

Steps the Health Department has already taken:

- Issued two health alerts advising providers to check for symptoms of Zika virus in patients who have travelled abroad, and to promptly report cases to the agency.
- Created a Zika travel alert for pregnant women – which is available in nine languages – and currently distributing it to providers, physicians, elected officials, community and faith based organizations.
- Spread the message through social media – Twitter and Facebook primarily.
- Contacted community and faith based organizations around New York City to educate the public about the risk of travelling to impacted countries.

Zika is a virus spread to people through bites of infected mosquitoes. About 1 in 5 people who are infected do not become sick. For the people who become sick, the most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms begin two to 12 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms tend to be mild and last for a week. Most people fully recover and do not need to be hospitalized. However, several months following the outbreak of Zika in Brazil, a large increase in the number of babies born with a congenital birth defect called microcephaly was observed. Microcephaly describes a baby or child with a smaller than normal head.

New Yorkers traveling to countries impacted by this disease are potentially at risk. Pregnant women should consider delaying travel to affected countries until more information is gathered. Pregnant women who have recently traveled to effected countries should consult with their doctor.

New Yorkers traveling to warmer climate countries where transmission of Zika virus in ongoing should take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites, such as:

- Use repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus, and use in accordance with label.
- Wear protective clothing including long sleeves, long pants and closed shoes.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens.
- Use bed-nets if mosquitoes cannot be kept out of a residence.
- Eliminate standing water that collects in and around your residence.

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