June 20, 2014

Dear Group Leader,

The Kentucky Department for Public Health would like to inform you and your organization of confirmed cases of chikungunya virus (CHIKV) from individuals returning from Haiti. More cases are expected as other Kentuckians return from Haiti. Haiti is a known endemic area for CHIKV. CHIKV is transmitted to humans by the bite of INFECTED mosquitos. Mosquitos become infected when they bite a person with acute CHIKV infection. The period of time between when an infected mosquito bites a person and when the person develops signs and symptoms of the illness is typically 3-7 days.

With illness onset, the person develops high fever and chills, followed by a rash on the trunk, limbs and face lasting 3-4 days. Muscle and joint pain last about one week. Joint pain is often severe and typically runs its course in one month. However, in some cases, severe joint pain can last for years. Other nonspecific symptoms may include headache and sensitivity to light. CHIKV can be painful, but not usually fatal. There are other known diseases carried by the same mosquitos in endemic areas that can prove to be fatal. If a traveler develops any signs or symptoms of acute illness after recent travel to an endemic area, please see a health care professional.

Once your team returns home, we recommend that members stay in air conditioning and avoid contact with mosquitos for a week, or if ill, until 3 days after their illness resolves. Precautions must be taken to prevent CHIKV infected humans from being bitten by mosquitos in order to prevent transmission of CHIKV to local mosquitos, which in turn will prevent the spread of the illness to other Kentuckians. Kentucky does have both species of mosquitos that can become infected with CHIKV and then transmit the virus to humans. The mosquitos known to transmit the CHIKV infection are mosquitos that primarily bite during daytime hours.

There is no vaccine available to prevent CHIKV infection. There are other illnesses that are preventable in travelers. Up-to-date recommendations can be found at CDC’s Website [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/).

People at increased risk for severe disease should consider not traveling to areas with ongoing chikungunya outbreaks like Haiti. Persons at risk for severe disease include newborns exposed near the time of birth, older adults, and persons with underlying medical conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, or cardiovascular disease.

People can do the following to avoid being bitten by mosquitos:

- Wear long sleeves and pants
- Install secure screens to windows and doors to keep mosquitos out
- Use an insect repellent. For a full list of approved insect repellents can be found at CDC’s Website [http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html)
- Sleep under mosquito nets
- Stay indoors with air conditioning
- Wear permethrin-treated clothing
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The following measures can be taken to reduce the breeding of mosquitos:

- Keep water barrels, cisterns and water tanks covered with a lid
- Empty standing water in old tires, tin cans, bottles, trays, etc.
- Clean out clogged gutters and flat roofs where water may have settled
- Change water frequently in pet water dishes, bird baths and plant trays
- Trim weeds and tall grasses, where mosquitoes seek shade on hot days

A general fact sheet can be found at CDC’s Website http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/pdfs/CHIKV_FACT%20SHEET_CDC_General%20Public_cleared.pdf. Thank you for your helping keep the public free of CHIKV and other vector-borne illnesses. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local health department.

Sincerely,

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