



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION



ZIKA BRIEF FOR CARIBBEAN TRAVEL PARTNERS

The spread of Zika virus in the Americas, other tropical regions and most recently in Florida has understandably caused concern to both residents of and travelers to those areas. While ZIKA virus itself is described as a mild virus with only one in 5 persons showing any symptoms, a link of the virus to microcephaly in babies has been confirmed even though the precise nature of this link is yet to be determined.

The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) are aware that our travel partners and consumers may have questions about travel to the region. We have compiled this brief and links to related resources to provide pertinent information about Zika and travel to the Caribbean.

CARIBBEAN TOURISM

The Caribbean set a record for visitor arrivals in 2015 with more than 28 million visitors and all indications point to continued growth in its popularity as one of the world's most desirable warm weather destinations. Overnight visitor arrivals to the region in 2016 are expected to increase over the banner year experienced in 2015. While the news coverage of Zika has given some guests (especially pregnant women or those wishing to conceive), a reason to pause, the overwhelming majority of travelers has chosen to proceed with their plans and enjoy a Caribbean vacation.

MEASURES BEING TAKEN BY THE CARIBBEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Since January 2016, Caribbean countries and their tourism stakeholders have aggressively taken proactive measures to ensure a safe environment for local citizens, residents and visitors alike. CHTA and CTO have partnered with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) in support of these measures.

Initiatives which have been undertaken include:

Information and Awareness:

Hotel staff and guests are being provided with timely information regarding prevention, transmission and symptoms of mosquito borne illnesses such as Zika.

Vector Management Programs: These are programs to prevent mosquito breeding. Throughout the region, Government health agencies and Caribbean hotels have put in place aggressive programs utilizing the latest methods, technologies and non-chemical controls. Hotels have trained their teams to identify and eliminate potential breeding grounds and also extend their efforts and knowledge beyond the immediate hotel grounds to surrounding communities.

Guest Precautions: Guests are being advised to use long-lasting insect repellent on exposed skin. In many Caribbean hotels, insect repellent is placed in guest rooms on a complimentary basis or made easily available for purchase. Employees and guests are advised to wear protective clothing, if not using repellent,

during dawn and dusk hours. These are the times that Zika-carrying mosquitoes are mostly active. Many hotels have mosquito screens on their windows and/or netting around the guest beds as an added precaution.

Clean-Up Campaigns: Countries across the region have undertaken national clean-up campaigns to help eradicate mosquito breeding grounds and there are ongoing educational programs on television and radio.

PRECAUTIONS FOR TRAVELERS

Guests are advised to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves against insect bites in much the same way they would on any holiday in a tropical country or at home. Pregnant women or women seeking to become pregnant should consult with their medical professional.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and other health agencies, including the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have said that Zika symptoms for the vast majority of people are mild and last two to seven days. In fact, according to the WHO and the CDC, four in five people who contract the virus never know they have it. Until further evidence is available, individuals who contract the disease are presumed to be immune for life.

ONGOING MONITORING

CHTA and CTO take the health and safety of our guests very seriously. Based on the evidence and the aggressive efforts being undertaken, we firmly believe that when the necessary precautions are taken, the Zika virus should not impede a positive Caribbean vacation experience. Reflecting this, WHO has not issued travel restrictions to any Caribbean country. We will continue to closely monitor this issue and take all steps necessary to ensure our partners and guests are kept up to date with any new developments. As well, CTO and CHTA remain in close contact with CARPHA to monitor and research Zika cases in the Caribbean and to communicate prevention and control measures to residents and visitors.

For more information visit:

Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association:

<http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/knowledge/learning-tools/resources/>

Caribbean Public Health Agency:

<http://carpha.org/zika>

Caribbean Tourism Organization:

<http://www.onecaribbean.org/?s=zika>

United States Centers for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/zika/information-for-travelers/en/>