February 8, 2016

To: The University of Denver Community

From: The Health and Counseling Center

The University of Denver Health and Counseling Center would like to remind students, faculty and staff who may be traveling to and from affected areas of recent developments regarding Zika virus. On January 16th, 2016 the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) issued a travel alert highlighting countries with active Zika virus transmission. The situation is rapidly evolving but current transmission and outbreaks are active in Mexico, Central and South America, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean, and Cape Verde.

Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause mild symptoms of fever, rash, joint pain or conjunctivitis lasting several days to a week. Unfortunately Zika infection is linked to some birth defects, including microcephaly (small head size associated with developmental problems) and can be spread through blood or sexual contact.

For pregnant women or women planning to become pregnant the CDC recommends considering postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. If you have a male partner who lives in or has traveled to an area where Zika transmission is ongoing, either abstain from sex or use condoms consistently and correctly for the duration of your pregnancy. Some health authorities have advised women living in Zika affected areas to delay pregnancy for up to 2 years.

There is no vaccine to prevent or specific medicine to treat Zika infections so symptoms should be treated with plenty of rest, fluids to prevent dehydration, and acetaminophen (Tylenol) to relieve fever and pain. See your healthcare provider if you develop more severe symptoms and have recently traveled to an area with active Zika transmission. Prevention is key to reducing the spread of this infection with protection of exposed skin and the use of EPA-registered insect repellents when traveling.