FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Williamson County and Cities Health District Urges Precaution Against Mosquito Bites**

The Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) Integrated Mosquito Management Program utilizes a comprehensive management strategy to identify and test mosquitoes that carry West Nile Virus, monitor arbovirus illness in humans, and alert and educate citizens about personal protection.

As of today, there is one confirmed travel-related case of Zika virus in Williamson County.

People living or traveling to areas with mosquito activity should carefully follow steps to avoid mosquito bites. People returning from Zika-affected areas that feel sick upon return should see their physicians and report that they have traveled. Personal precautions include:
- Wear insect repellent.
- Cover up with long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Practice abstinence or use condoms.
- Keep mosquitoes out with air conditioning or intact window screens.
- Limit outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

Zika virus is primarily spread to people through mosquito bites. The virus also can be spread from mother to unborn child or to her newborn around the time of birth. Spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual contact also has been reported.

The disease can cause fever, rash, muscle and joint aches and red eyes but also has been linked to the birth defect microcephaly and other poor birth outcomes in some women infected during their pregnancy. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week, and hospitalizations are rare. A small number of cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome, a paralysis disorder, also have been linked to Zika virus infection. Most people exposed to Zika virus won’t develop any symptoms at all. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for the virus.

West Nile Virus is also a concern for Central Texas residents. The symptoms are generally mild, including fever, headache, and rash, but may cause neurological complications. Texas experiences several cases each year, some resulting in hospitalization and death. WCCHD encourages providers to screen patients for this illness.
WCCHD suggests the following steps people can take in and around their own homes to help reduce potential mosquito breeding habitats:

- At least weekly, empty or get rid of cans, buckets, old tires, plant saucers and other containers that hold water.
- Keep gutters clear of debris and standing water.
- Keep public drains and ditches clear of weeds and trash so water will not collect.
- Treat standing water with larvicide (such as mosquito “dunks”) when it cannot be drained and the water will be present for more than seven days.
- Remove standing water around structures and from flat roofs.
- Change water in pet dishes daily.
- Change water in wading pools and bird baths several times a week.
- Maintain backyard pools or hot tubs.
- Cover trash containers.
- Screen rain barrels and openings to water tanks or cisterns.
- If mosquito problems persist, consider pesticide applications for vegetation around the home.

WCCHD’s Fight the Bite campaign encourages public awareness of the three D’s throughout the year:

- **Dress** in long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
- **Drain** standing water in flower pots, pet dishes, or clogged gutters so mosquitos don’t have a place to breed.
- **Defend** using an EPA-approved insect repellant.

For more information, visit [www.wcchd.org](http://www.wcchd.org).

**Interview Op:** John Teel, WCCHD Executive Director, and Dr. Christie Shen, Medical Director/Health Authority will be available for interviews today from 2:00 - 3:00 pm at the WCCHD Administrative Offices located at 312 Main St. Georgetown, TX 78626.

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