The United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a health-related travel alert for a number of countries including Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Mexico for women who are pregnant or who are trying to become pregnant. Currently, Central America is experiencing an outbreak of a virus called Zika, which may be responsible for birth defects in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika while pregnant. Neither the CDC nor the Department of State considers this situation a reason to cancel or postpone travel to Central America for anyone other than pregnant women.

However, enhanced precautions to prevent mosquito bites are strongly encouraged for everyone who is traveling to these countries this spring. Enhanced precautions include limiting skin exposure by wearing long pants and long sleeves, regularly using mosquito repellent, and sleeping under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes that carry the Zika virus are most active in the morning and the evening, and the same mosquitoes are also know vectors for dengue fever, yellow fever, West Nile fever, and chikungunya. Extra caution during the mornings and evenings is imperative.

Please contact Kimberly Connelly (kconnelly@kumc.edu) or Zachary Rogers (zrogers2@kumc.edu) with any questions or concerns regarding health and safety that you may have.


Here is the CDC travel notice:

Zika Virus in Pregnancy
(Interim Recommendations)

Zika virus can be spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and these outcomes is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:

- Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
  - Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
  - If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

- Women who are trying to become pregnant:
  - Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
  - Strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

Specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. As more information becomes available, this travel notice will be updated. Please check back frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations.

We certainly do not want to alarm anyone unnecessarily, nonetheless, given the magnitude of risk to fetal development we encourage you to take a precautionary pregnancy test if there is even a remote chance you could be pregnant.