

Health Advice for Travellers to the Festival of Pacific Arts, Guam 2016

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This travel health advice No. 2 for participants and travellers to the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts (Guam FestPac 2016) is an update to the first travel advice that was posted on PacNet and issued to country focal points on Friday 26 February 2016.

The risk for Zika virus infection importation and exportation during the staging of this two week-long “Olympic Cultural Festival” is addressed in this advice. Since its emergence in the Pacific region in 2007 and re-emergence in 2013, 16 of the 27 countries and territories participating in Guam FestPac 2016 have reported confirmed cases of Zika virus infection. Guam is one of the 11 countries that has not had any case of Zika virus infection. Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services authorities are closely monitoring the situation and putting in place prevention and control plans in anticipation of any possible introduction of Zika into Guam.



About Zika virus infection

The Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 in the Zika forest of Uganda. The virus is transmitted in the human population through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. It usually causes a mild flu-like illness, with symptoms of low grade fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. The illness typically resolves within a few days to a week without medical intervention and is rarely severe. There is currently no vaccine to prevent Zika and treatment is mainly symptomatic.

Why are we concerned about Zika virus infection?

Zika virus infection in pregnant women has been linked to microcephaly and other adverse birth effects. Microcephaly is a birth defect where a baby’s head is smaller than normal when compared to babies of the same sex and age. Babies with microcephaly show abnormality in brain development and have smaller brains. Due to clustering of microcephaly cases that show evidence of being linked to infection by the Zika virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Zika virus infection a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 1 February 2016.

It is possible to transmit the Zika virus via blood transfusions; however, there is no evidence that Zika virus can be transmitted through casual contact or by air. Additionally, recent evidence indicates a risk associated with sexual transmission of the Zika virus.

Travel advice

A disease risk assessment undertaken by the Pacific Community (SPC) in November 2015 and updated in March 2016 indicate a heightened risk for the spread of mosquito-borne diseases during Guam FestPac 2016, due to the fact that neighboring Pacific island countries and territories and southeast Asian countries (Philippines) are experiencing a wave of outbreaks of dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika virus infection. Additionally, there is presence of the *Aedes* mosquito on the island of Guam, which are efficient vehicles for the transmission of these infections.

As a participant or traveller to Guam FestPac 2016 you are advised to consider the following:

- If you are coming from a country with active transmission of Zika virus infection (Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa, Kosrae state (Federated States of Micronesia)) and dengue (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Queensland (Australia), New Caledonia, Samoa, French Polynesia), you should consider closely monitoring the advice provided by your local health authorities, WHO and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ensure that you protect yourself against mosquito bites. Know the signs and symptoms of Zika virus infection, and if you feel unwell prior to travelling seek medical attention immediately.
- If you are travelling from a Zika-free country, you must still ensure that you protect yourself against mosquito bites while in Guam.





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There is no travel restriction in place to any of the affected Pacific island countries and territories; however, all participants and travellers are advised to plan your travel and protect yourself before your departure, based on the recommendations below.

Health check-up

For your own safety and well-being, participants and visitors should be fit for travel. You should consult a healthcare provider on recommended vaccines and medicines that you may need when traveling to Guam FestPac at least four weeks before departure. If you have a pre-existing medical condition, you must ensure that you are cleared for travel.

Immunisation

You should be up-to-date on your routine (measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus, and polio) and recommended (hepatitis A, hepatitis B, varicella (chickenpox) and seasonal influenza) vaccines. If you require any vaccines, schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider. Remember that some vaccines require some time to take effect, and more than one dose may be needed.

Health kit

Pack a travel health kit with first aid supplies (sunscreen, painkillers, antiseptic, insect repellent and anti-diarrhea tablets) and medications, enough to last your entire trip. Please bring one month's supply of your routine prescription medications; carry them in their original packaging and follow the directions for use. Availability of condoms is limited and, if needed, participants are encouraged to bring their own supply.

Travel insurance

Health insurance that covers you in your home country may not cover you in Guam. You will be liable for covering any medical and associated costs, which could be very expensive. Cover yourself with an appropriate level of travel health insurance. Should you become unwell (fever, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.) in Guam, visit the nearest Community Health Center or Urgent Care at Guam Memorial Hospital (GMH):

Northern Region Community Health Center

520 W. Santa Monica Avenue, Dededo

M – F: 7:30am – 8pm

Sat: 7:30am – 6pm

Southern Region Community Health Center, Inarajan

M – Th: 7:30am – 8pm

F: 7:30am – 5pm

Sat: 7:30am – 12pm

Urgent Care, GMH

Daily: 3pm – 11pm

For any additional information please visit the following websites:

Official website of Guam FestPac:

<https://festpac.visitguam.com/>

Official website of Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services:

<http://dphss.guam.gov/>

Official website of SPC: <http://www.spc.int/>

Official website of WHO: www.who.int

Official website of U.S. CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/>



AFTER the festival

If you develop any illness after returning from Guam, you may have obligations to notify immigration and local healthcare authorities. You should report any illness you have developed, and indicate your travel history.

GENERAL ADVICE for everyone

Practise healthy habits, such as good hand hygiene and proper coughing and sneezing etiquette (cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve).

Avoid abusing alcohol and/or taking any other drugs which may lead to health problems and/or increase the risk of unhealthy or dangerous behaviour.

Avoid swimming indiscriminately at beaches and in freshwater lakes and rivers. Follow the Guam Environmental Protection Agency Beach Advisory for

Guidance: <http://epa.guam.gov/beach-report/current-beach-report/>

EMERGENCY



call 911

Note that health insurance that covers you in your home country may not cover you in Guam, so you may have to pay for any care you receive in Guam.

Therefore, consider taking out an appropriate level of travel health insurance.