



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama Departments of Public Health and Senior Services join forces to educate state residents about the Zika virus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Alabama Department of Public Health are working together to help ensure that everyone in the state understands how to protect themselves from the Zika virus. Coloring books have been distributed to the more than 8,000 people attending senior centers throughout the state to educate the public about Zika virus disease.

The books, titled "SWAT Team Skeeter Beaters Coloring Books," present mosquito control and bite prevention information in an educational and entertaining format. In late May, coloring books were distributed to students in pre-kindergarten through third grade in public schools statewide as well as to some private schools and other groups.

"These coloring books can be an effective way to get the message out to families and engage Alabamians of all ages about the need to protect themselves and their communities by eliminating places where mosquitoes can breed," State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said. "This helps prevent mosquito-borne illnesses such as Zika."

Commissioner Neal Morrison of the Alabama Department of Senior Services said, "We are excited about the partnership between our departments to get good information out to the public, specifically older adults who are watching after and often raising their grandchildren. Communicating and participating in this activity can strengthen the bonds between the generations that are so important in our society. These coloring books have been well received and several area agencies have partnered with their local health departments to provide further information regarding the virus."

The bites of infected *Aedes* species mosquitoes transmit the Zika virus to people. These are the same mosquitoes that spread dengue and chikungunya viruses. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain or pink eye. Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting several days to a week. Zika virus typically remains in the blood of an infected person for a few days, but it can be found longer in some people. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon and deaths are rare.

Mosquitoes do not need very much water to breed, so it is important to eliminate standing pools of water, dispose of unused material and keep weeds, grass and vines trimmed. There is no vaccine to protect against Zika. Most concerning is the effect that the Zika virus has on the

unborn baby because it has been found to be the cause of severe birth defects and other poor birth outcomes linked with infection during pregnancy.

For more information about the Zika virus and emergency preparedness, visit www.adph.org/mosquito.

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