

A.G. Schneiderman Issues Cease And Desist Letters Demanding Companies Stop Falsely Advertising Ineffective Products As “Zika-Preventive”

A.G. And NYC Health Commissioner Warn Consumers About Deceptive Ads For Zika Prevention Products That Don't Work, Advises On Evidence-Based Zika Prevention Measures Consumers Can Take

Schneiderman: My Office Will Not Tolerate Deceptive Advertising Of Products That Provide Only A False Sense Of Security Against A Real Threat

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office issued cease and desist letters to seven companies that market products with claims that the products prevent or protect against Zika virus even though the products are known to be ineffective for that purpose. The letters demand that the companies selling these products stop advertising them as “Zika-protective” or “Zika-preventive.” The Attorney General also issued a consumer alert warning New Yorkers about the deceptive ads and directing them to evidence-based Zika prevention measures that have been recommended by public health authorities. Attorney General Schneiderman was joined for the announcement by NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett and State Senator Adriano Espaillat.

“New Yorkers are understandably concerned about Zika virus and looking for ways to protect themselves and their families,” **Attorney General Schneiderman** said. “Unfortunately, some companies are taking advantage of public concern about Zika to peddle products that simply don’t work. My office will not tolerate deceptive advertising of products that provide only a false sense of security against a real threat.”

State Senator Adriano Espaillat said, “It is completely unacceptable for companies to deceive their customers, and it is particularly heinous when their deception could negatively impact the public's health. I am proud to join Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman, a tireless consumer advocate, to tell these companies that we will not tolerate these practices in New York.”

“The only products that provide effective protection from mosquito bites contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and an insect repellent called IR3535 – all other products are a waste of money and may put you at risk of being bitten,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “We continue to remind women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant to not travel to a Zika-affected area – that includes most of Latin America and the Caribbean, and a neighborhood in Miami, Florida. Because of the risk of sexual transmission, partners of pregnant women should consider staying away from these areas, too.”

Each of the seven companies that were issued cease and desist letters advertised either ultrasonic devices or botanical oil-based products with claims that the products would prevent or protect against Zika virus by repelling mosquitoes even though the products contain no EPA-registered insect repellents with at least one

of the five CDC-recommended active ingredients. The makers of ultrasonic devices claim that they repel mosquitoes by emitting a high frequency buzz. Numerous scientific studies have found that ultrasonic devices do not repel mosquitoes, and may even attract mosquitoes. The makers of botanical oil-based products, including wrist bands, bracelets, patches and stickers, claim that products contain ingredients that repel mosquitoes. Common botanical ingredients, including oil of geranium, cedar, lemongrass, soy and citronella and are not EPA-registered insect repellents with at least one of the five CDC-recommended active ingredients, and the New York State Department of Health has warned that these products have limited effectiveness in repelling mosquitoes.

Zika virus is primarily spread by infected mosquitoes, although it can also be spread by sexual contact or blood contact. Zika virus can cause symptoms including mild fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Zika poses a serious threat to women who are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, because it may cause microcephaly, a serious birth defect that affects brain development.

To prevent bites from potentially infected mosquitoes, the Centers for Disease Control recommend that consumers use only EPA-registered insect repellents with at least one of the five CDC-recommended active ingredients. These repellents contain ingredients that have been clinically proven to effectively repel mosquitoes.

Attorney General Schneiderman advised consumers to avoid ultrasonic and botanical mosquito repellents, as well as Vitamin B-based repellents, which have also been found to be ineffective. Products that are currently being sold to New York consumers that claim to prevent the Zika virus, even when these products contain none of CDC-approved active ingredients include:

- Wildheart Outdoors Natural Mosquito Repellent Bracelet
- MosQUITo Repellent Bracelet Wristband Band
- Neor Mosquito Repellent Bracelet
- Kenza High Quality Zika Mosquito Repellent Smiley Patch
- Mobile Pro Gear ZIKA Shield Mosquito Repellent Bands
- STAR Ultrasonic Pest Repeller
- iGear iGuard 2.0 Ultrasonic Insect Pest Repellent

Instead, the Attorney General advised consumers to look for EPA-registered insect repellents containing at least one of the following active ingredients: DEET, Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel and icaridin), IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, and Para-Menthane-Diol. Only products containing at least one of these ingredients have been recommended by the CDC as the safe and effective way of protecting against the Zika virus.

Consumers should also be aware that there is no cure for the Zika virus as of this date, and products claiming to be cures are deceptive.

New York consumers are also advised to follow these CDC recommendations to protect against the Zika virus:

- Avoid travel in areas with active mosquito-borne transmission of the Zika virus. These areas can be found on the [CDC's website](#).
- If one must travel to one of the identified areas, consumers should:
 - Wear pants and long sleeves,
 - Stay in places with air conditioning and screens on windows and doors,
 - Sleep under mosquito bed nets, and
 - Treat clothing with permethrin or purchase pre-treated clothing.

According to the New York City Department of Health, as of July 15 there were 346 reported cases of Zika in New York City. However, if experiencing symptoms associated with Zika, consumers are strongly encouraged to visit their healthcare provider immediately.

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