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Zika Guidance for Physicians/Healthcare Providers

Zika is a mosquito-borne disease caused by a flavivirus. The most commonly reported symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis but may also include myalgia, headache, retro-orbital pain, and vomiting. Illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting several days to a week; approximately 80% of those infected with the virus will not show symptoms. Zika virus infection in pregnant woman can result in microcephaly and other birth defects.

Healthcare providers evaluating symptomatic persons (male or female) with travel to areas with ongoing Zika virus transmission, a suspect sexual transmission of Zika, a suspect local vector-borne transmission of Zika, a fetus/infant with a Zika-related birth defect, or an uninsured asymptomatic pregnant woman should:

- Report the suspect case immediately to Public Health to determine whether Zika testing is warranted. All tests conducted at the state laboratory must be approved by your district epidemiologist, the State Zika Epidemiology Team at 404-657-2588 (M-F, 8am-5pm), or 1-866-PUB-HLTH (after hours). Prior to approving a patient for Zika virus testing, Public Health needs ALL the following information listed below. If sexual transmission is suspected, this information is needed for both the suspect case and the sexual contact who traveled. Please confirm “no travel” (domestic or international) for suspect local transmission cases. Specimens shipped without prior approval and/or without the appropriate DPH paperwork will not be tested.
 1. Patient name
 2. Patient date of birth
 3. Sex (if female, pregnancy status and expected due date)
 4. Patient address
 5. Travel location(s) (specific countries)
 6. Travel dates (specific dates)
 7. Date of symptom onset
 8. Symptoms/Observed birth defect(s)
 9. Last date of unprotected sex (if exposure is sexual)
- Clinical questions may be triaged by epidemiology at any time, however, laboratory requisitions can only be processed during normal business hours. Two separate serum samples (at least 1 mL each, in red or tiger top tubes) and one free catch urine sample (at least 1 mL, in a sterile cup) can be collected by your facility after hours for a suspect case and held refrigerated until the next business day for processing.
- DPH Epidemiology will fax the appropriate lab forms with approval codes after the patient is approved for testing.
- Record any travel (domestic or international) that occurred during the 10 days after infection for symptomatic patients.
- For symptomatic patients, counsel the patient to minimize their exposure to mosquitoes in Georgia for three weeks after illness onset to reduce the risk of local transmission. When indoors, patients should ensure that doors and windows are kept closed and that there are no holes in door and window screens. When outdoors, patients should wear long sleeved shirts and pants and use mosquito repellent containing 20-30% DEET on exposed skin. Due to warm winter temperatures, this guidance should be given year-round in Georgia.
- Order appropriate commercial laboratory testing for Zika for asymptomatic travelers (including pregnant women):
 - For asymptomatic pregnant women with ongoing travel/sexual exposure (ex: living in or frequently traveling to areas with Zika virus transmission), CDC recommends Zika virus nucleic acid testing (NAT) three times during pregnancy, with the first round of NAT done at the initiation of prenatal care. NAT includes any molecular test, such as serum/urine PCR.

- For asymptomatic pregnant women without ongoing travel/sexual exposure (ex: single or occasional travel to areas with Zika virus transmission), Zika virus testing is **not routinely recommended**. CDC recommends a patient-provider shared decision-making model to determine whether a patient in this category should be tested.
- Order appropriate commercial laboratory testing for dengue and chikungunya for symptomatic travelers because of the similarities in clinical presentation and geographic distribution of these viruses and Zika.

If you have questions about Zika, please contact your district health department or the State Zika Epidemiology Program at Georgia Department of Public Health at 404-657-2588.