

MLS Laboratory Update: Zika Travelers Update

March 13, 2019

Purpose of this Message: To inform MLS laboratories of a Health Alert Network (HAN) update sent to providers concerning testing recommendations for Zika. This message was originally sent to clinicians from the MDH-IDEPC Vectorborne Unit.

Action Items: None.

- MDH is no longer routinely recommending testing for asymptomatic pregnant women with recent possible exposure to Zika but no travel to current outbreak areas. These pregnancies should still be closely monitored for any abnormalities.
- Testing may be recommended on a case-by-case basis for asymptomatic pregnant women with ongoing Zika virus exposure, travel to current outbreak areas, or prenatal ultrasound findings suggestive of congenital Zika virus infection.
- Testing is still recommended for anyone with symptoms of Zika that has traveled to current Zika outbreak or risk areas.
- Providers should contact MDH before submitting specimens for Zika testing by calling 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414.

Background: Based on currently available data on risk, the spread of Zika has slowed in many areas, and many countries that formerly had outbreaks are now experiencing a lull in disease activity. This does not mean that disease risk is gone. The virus is still present in these areas, and outbreaks may occur at any time. It is also important to consider that countries around the world vary widely in their ability to monitor, detect, and report Zika virus activity so it is impossible for us to provide a thorough risk assessment at the local level. Due to differences in surveillance and monitoring there may be delays in identifying an outbreak.

Although Zika may be less common than it was a few years ago, it's important for people to remember that severe birth defects, as well as miscarriage and stillbirth, can occur after exposure to the virus during pregnancy. Recommendations related to family planning (i.e., waiting 8 weeks (women) and 3 months (men) until trying to conceive) and condom use during pregnancy for couples with exposures remain in place.

Updated CDC Travel Guidance for Zika Virus: Previous guidance recommended that pregnant women not travel to any area with risk of Zika. The updated guidance (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>) now recommends that pregnant women and couples planning to become pregnant within three months talk to their healthcare providers to carefully consider the risks and possible consequences of travel to areas with risk of Zika. CDC and MDH continue to recommend that pregnant women not travel to any areas currently experiencing a Zika outbreak.

The current CDC map only reflects available epidemiological evidence of Zika virus within countries around the world. It is important to note that this information is highly dependent on the resources and infrastructure available in the countries themselves. This means that low-level activity and outbreaks may not be reflected in the CDC map in a timely manner or, potentially, at all.

Thank you,

Anna K. Strain, Ph.D.

Virology/Immunology Supervisor

Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health

Phone : 651-201-5035

www.health.state.mn.us/mls

Minnesota Department of Health
Public Health Laboratory
Minnesota Laboratory System
601 Robert St. N
St. Paul, MN 55164-0899
651-201-5200
health.mnlabsystem@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/mls

THIS IS AN UPDATE FROM THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY (MDH-PHL) AND THE MINNESOTA LABORATORY SYSTEM (MLS). THIS MESSAGE IS BEING SENT TO MLS LABORATORY CONTACTS SERVING MINNESOTA RESIDENTS. YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO ALL APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL WITHIN YOUR INSTITUTION AND HEALTH SYSTEM

THE CONTENT OF THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL AND RESPONSE PARTNERS WHO HAVE A NEED TO KNOW THE INFORMATION TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES. IT IS FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. DO NOT DISTRIBUTE BEYOND THE INTENDED RECIPIENT GROUPS AS DESCRIBED IN THIS MESSAGE.