



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., Governor – Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor – Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

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December 16, 2016

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to update you on several important Zika related issues. We want to remind Maryland clinicians that Zika is still being transmitted in many areas of Central and South America, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Southeast Asia. It is important to continue counseling your patients, particularly pregnant women and women of childbearing age, who may be traveling to these areas about the importance of protecting themselves from mosquito bites and from sexual transmission of the virus by using condoms.

In addition, on December 9, the Texas Department of State Health Services reported a total of five locally acquired, mosquito-borne Zika virus infections in Brownsville, Texas. In response, on December 14, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Health Alert including guidance for pregnant women and women of reproductive age living in or traveling to Brownsville (<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00399.asp>). The city of Brownsville has been designated as a Zika cautionary area for testing and travel guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/intheus/texas-update.html#map>). CDC defines a Zika cautionary area as a geographic area where local spread of Zika virus has been identified, but there is not yet any evidence of widespread, sustained local spread. Although the level of risk in cautionary areas is unknown, pregnant women are still at risk. Based on this guidance, **pregnant women should consider postponing travel to the city of Brownsville.**

Persons who have lived in, traveled to, or had sex without a condom with someone who lives in or traveled to Brownsville, TX since October 29 should be considered for Zika virus testing according to existing DHMH and CDC guidelines. Women who had limited travel to Brownsville or had sex without a condom with a person who lives in or traveled to Brownsville may consider waiting at least 8 weeks after symptoms started or last possible exposure before trying to get pregnant. Men who had limited travel to Brownsville or had sex without a condom with a person who lives in or traveled to Brownsville may consider waiting at least 6 months after symptoms started or last possible exposure before trying to get their partner pregnant.

On December 9, CDC also issued updated guidance for people living in or traveling to South Florida. No new locally acquired, mosquito-borne cases of Zika virus had been detected in South Miami Beach for 45 days, and therefore South Miami Beach was changed from an active transmission area to a cautionary area (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/intheus/florida-update.html>). The same guidance as outlined above for Brownsville, TX now also applies to all of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

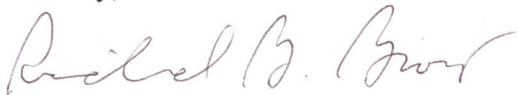
Several recent studies have made important discoveries about the effects of Zika on pregnant women and fetuses. These studies are linked to here for your reference:

1. [Birth Defects Among Fetuses and Infants of US Women With Evidence of Possible Zika Virus Infection During Pregnancy](#)
2. [Zika Virus RNA Replication and Persistence in Brain and Placental Tissue](#)
3. [Zika Virus Infection in Pregnant Women in Rio de Janeiro](#) and an associated editorial, [Monitoring and Preventing Congenital Zika Syndrome](#)
4. [Description of 13 Infants Born During October 2015–January 2016 With Congenital Zika Virus Infection Without Microcephaly at Birth — Brazil](#)

Lastly, we anticipate issuing updated guidance on Zika laboratory testing, including specimen submission, in the next few weeks. Please be watching for this information.

Please continue to contact your local health department or the Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau at (410) 767-6700 if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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