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Zika Virus – Recognition, Management, and Reporting of Zika Virus Infection in Travelers and Interim Guidance for Pregnant Women

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a level 2 travel alert for travelers to countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing, including Puerto Rico, the Caribbean (Haiti and Martinique), Mexico, Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama), and South America (Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Paraguay, Suriname, and Venezuela). Local transmission of Zika virus has not been documented in the continental United States. However, infections have been reported in travelers returning to the United States. While the risk for transmission of Zika is still low in California, infected travelers can transmit the virus to *Aedes* mosquitoes that bite them. To date, no local transmission of Zika infections has occurred in California.

The CDC alert follows reports in Brazil of increased numbers of newborns with microcephaly (a much smaller expected head size) and fetal losses among mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Additional studies are needed to understand potential embryonic and fetal effects of Zika virus.

Until more is known, CDC and CDPH recommend special travel precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:

- Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
- Pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant who must travel to one of these areas should talk to their healthcare provider before travel and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites.
- Women who traveled to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission during pregnancy should be evaluated for Zika virus infection if they had any symptoms suggestive of Zika, or if their baby has evidence of microcephaly or brain calcifications. Dengue and chikungunya virus infections should be ruled out in these cases.

Recommendations for Physicians caring for Pregnant Women

- Ask all pregnant women about recent travel.
- Pregnant women with a history of travel to an area with Zika virus transmission and who report two or more symptoms consistent with Zika virus disease (acute onset of fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgia, or conjunctivitis) during or within 2 weeks of travel, or who have ultrasound findings of fetal microcephaly or intracranial calcifications, should be tested for Zika virus infection in consultation with the Communicable Disease Office of Ventura County Public Health (Phone: 805-981-5201, Fax: 805-981-5200).
- Testing is not indicated for women without a travel history to an area Zika virus transmission.
- In pregnant women with laboratory evidence of Zika virus infection, serial ultrasound examination should be considered to monitor fetal growth and anatomy. Referral to a maternal-fetal medicine or infectious disease specialist with expertise in pregnancy management is recommended.
- There is no specific treatment for Zika virus infection, supportive care is recommended.

Recommendations for Physicians for all Other Patients

- Consider Zika in the differential diagnosis of febrile patients with compatible signs, who have traveled to an area with ongoing transmission of Zika virus in the two weeks prior to symptom onset.
- Report suspect cases of Zika, chikungunya, or dengue and coordinate diagnostic testing through the Communicable Disease Office at Ventura County Public Health (Phone: 805-981-5201, Fax: 805-981-5200). Establishing the diagnosis is important because proper clinical management of dengue can improve outcome and follow-up is recommended for women who have Zika during pregnancy.
- Advise patients with suspect Zika, chikungunya, or dengue to take measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes during the first week of illness.

Important Information for Travelers

If you are traveling to a region affected by Zika, chikungunya, or dengue, the California Department of Public Health recommends taking appropriate precautions for avoiding mosquito bites during the day and at night. Pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant should review the recommendations listed earlier.

If you have returned from an affected region and have fever with rash and/or joint pain within the week following your return, please contact your medical provider and say where you have traveled.

Zika Virus Disease

Zika is an infectious disease caused by Zika virus, which is transmitted by the bite of Aedes mosquitoes. Most of those infected have no symptoms. If symptoms do develop, the most common are fever, rash, joint pain, and/or red eyes. Symptoms usually begin 3 – 7 days after a person is bitten by an infected mosquito and will last several days to a week. The illness is usually mild, and severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. There is no specific treatment for Zika, the only treatment option available is supportive care including rest, fluids, and use of analgesics and antipyretics.

Maternal-fetal transmission of Zika virus has been documented throughout pregnancy. While Zika virus infection has been associated with fetal losses, it is unknown if the infection caused the fetal loss. Similarly, Zika infections have been confirmed in infants with microcephaly, and while the outbreak of Zika virus infection in Brazil has been associated with an increase in microcephalic births in that country, it is unknown how many of these births is associated with Zika virus infection.

Prevention

There are no vaccines to prevent Zika infection. Preventing mosquito bites is the only way to avoid becoming infected.

- Use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol for long lasting protection. If you use both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first and then the repellent.
- Using insect repellent is safe and effective. Pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding can and should choose an EPA-registered insect repellent and use it according to the product label.
- When weather permits, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If you are not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes inside your home or hotel, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- Help reduce the number of mosquitoes outside your home or hotel room by emptying standing water from containers such as flowerpots or buckets.

Additional Zika virus information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6502e1er.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/clinicalevaluation.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/diagnostic.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/s0315-zika-virus-travel.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/travel-health-notice.html>

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Communicable Disease Office

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