

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Leana S. Wen, M.D., M.Sc., FAAEM
Commissioner of Health
1001 E. Fayette St.
Baltimore, MD 21202
Tel: 410-396-4398

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Dear Baltimore City Clinicians,

We would like to update you on recent events surrounding Zika virus.

The disease caused by Zika virus has been known since 1947, and the first transmission outside of Asia and Africa was reported in 2007. Zika has caused alarm in Brazil and other countries due to possible association with prenatal exposure and microcephaly. It is a disease typically spread through a bite from the *Aedes* mosquito, though this week there has been a documented case of transmission through sexual contact. Up to 80% of people infected show no symptoms; others have generally mild symptoms including fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgias/myalgias, conjunctivitis and headaches. Treatment is supportive.

The situation with Zika virus is quickly evolving. There are dozens of travelers to the U.S. who have tested positive for Zika. This week, the World Health Organization has declared Zika virus a public health emergency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued new travel guidance.

Because of the evolving situation with Zika virus, we are asking all clinicians to:

- 1) Screen all patients for a travel history. For up to date information about high risk areas, please refer to the CDC website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.)
- 2) Report patients with travel history and symptoms to the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) Office of Acute Communicable Diseases at 410-396-4436. We will discuss the case with you and help determine next steps for testing. There are other diseases with similar presentations including dengue and malaria. All testing will be coordinated through the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and at this time the CDC is the only laboratory that can do Zika testing. The DHMH Laboratory is working to have Zika testing available soon. The CDC currently recommends testing for those with *both* a travel history within 2 weeks of symptom development *and* 2 or more symptoms of the disease. This applies to both pregnant and non-pregnant individuals.
- 3) For pregnant women who have no clinical symptoms but travel history within the past 2 weeks, they should follow up with their obstetrician to have a fetal ultrasound. Additional guidance for health care providers are available on the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/index.html>).

This is a developing situation and guidelines may change. We are working very closely with State and federal officials and recommend that you **regularly check the CDC Zika Virus website** (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>) **for the most recent updates.** We will also have updates on the BCHD [website](#). Please contact the BCHD Office of Acute Communicable Diseases at 410-396-4436 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Leana Wen, M.D., M.Sc.
Commissioner
Baltimore City Health Department

Joneigh Khaldun, M.D., MPH
Chief Medical Officer
Baltimore City Health Department