

HEALTH UPDATE



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

TO: Physicians and other Healthcare Providers

Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH

Clark County Public Health, (360) 397-8412

Sarah D. Present MD, MPH

Skamania County Community Health, (509) 427-3850

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, (360) 795-6207

Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, (360) 414-5599

Alert categories:
Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

Summary

As of February 23, 2016, CDC and state public health departments are investigating 14 additional reports of possible sexual transmission of Zika virus, including several involving pregnant women. Because these reports suggest sexual transmission may be a more likely means of transmission for Zika virus than previously considered, CDC strongly recommends adhering to its interim guidance published on February 5 and summarized below, while additional investigations are being completed. These recommendations may change as more information becomes available regarding the incidence and duration of seminal shedding from infected men and the utility and availability of testing in this context. We encourage clinicians to be aware of and adhere to current recommendations for preventing sexual transmission of Zika virus, particularly for men with pregnant partners.

Recommendations for men and their pregnant sex partners

- Men who reside in or have traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex (i.e., vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, or fellatio) for the duration of the pregnancy.
- Pregnant women should discuss their male partner's potential exposures to mosquitoes and history of Zika-like illness (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms>) with their healthcare provider; providers can consult CDC's guidelines for evaluation and testing of pregnant women (6).

Recommendations for men and their non-pregnant sex partners

- Men who reside in or have traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission who are concerned about sexual transmission of Zika virus might consider abstaining from sexual activity or using condoms consistently and correctly during sex. Couples considering this personal decision should take several factors into account. Most infections are asymptomatic, and when illness does occur, it is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week; severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon.
- The risk for acquiring vector-borne Zika virus in areas of active transmission depends on the duration and extent of exposure to infected mosquitoes and the steps taken to prevent mosquito bites (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention>). After infection, Zika virus might persist in semen when it is no longer detectable in blood; studies to determine the duration of persistence in semen are not yet completed.
- Sexual transmission of Zika virus from infected women to their sex partners has not been documented, nor has transmission from persons who are asymptotically infected. Sexual transmission of many infections, including those caused by other viruses, is reduced by consistent and correct use of latex condoms.

Testing recommendations

- Zika virus testing is currently recommended to establish a diagnosis of infection in exposed persons with signs or symptoms consistent with Zika virus disease, and may be offered to asymptomatic pregnant women with possible exposure to Zika virus (6). However, interpretation of results is complex, and health care providers should contact their state, local, or territorial health department for assistance with arranging testing and interpreting results.
- At this time, testing of exposed, asymptomatic men for the purpose of assessing risk for sexual transmission is not recommended.

All Zika virus testing must be approved by the local health jurisdiction **prior** to specimen submission. For questions or to request testing, please contact:

- Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182.
- Cowlitz County Health Department: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207

References

1. Oster AM, Brooks JT, Stryker JE, et al. Interim Guidelines for prevention of sexual transmission of Zika virus — United States, 2016. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2016;65:120–121. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6505e1.htm>
2. Atkinson B, Hearn P, Afrough B, et al. Detection of Zika virus in semen [letter]. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2016 May [cited February 22, 2016]. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid2205.160107>
3. Martines RB, Bhatnagar J, Keating MK, et al. Evidence of Zika virus infection in brain and placental tissues from two congenitally infected newborns and two fetal losses — Brazil, 2015. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2016;65 (Early Release)(06):1-2. http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6506e1.htm?s_cid=mm6506e1_e Published February 19, 2016.
4. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Rapid risk assessment: Zika virus epidemic in the Americas: potential association with microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome – 10 December 2015. <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/zika-virus-americas-association-withmicrocephaly-rapid-risk-assessment.pdf> (login required) Published 2015. Accessed Feb 1, 2016.
5. Dallas County Health and Human Services. DCHHS reports first Zika virus case in Dallas County acquired through sexual transmission. February 2, 2016. <http://www.dallascounty.org/department/hhs/press/documents/PR2-2-16DCHHSReportsFirstCaseofZikaVirusThroughSexualTransmission.pdf>
6. Oduyebo T, Petersen EE, Rasmussen SA, et al. Update: interim guidelines for health care providers caring for pregnant women and women of reproductive age with possible Zika virus exposure— United States, 2016. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2016;65. http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6505e2.htm?s_cid=mm6505e2_e

Thank you for your partnership.