

February 5, 2016

Attention: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Hospitals – Emergency Rooms/Infection Control
/Occupational Health, Walk-In Clinics

RE: ZIKA VIRUS

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has confirmed cases of Zika virus in Canada among returned travellers from Central and South America. **There have been no cases of locally-acquired Zika virus reported in Canada and to date, no travel-related cases have been reported in Ontario.**

How is Zika virus spread? Zika virus is spread primarily by the bite of infected mosquitos. There is also evidence that the virus can be transmitted from a **pregnant women to her fetus**, and possibly through **sexual contact** and **blood transfusions**. The mosquitos known to transmit Zika (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes) are not established in Canada.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection? The Zika virus infection is considered a mild illness that generally resolves in 2-7 days. In fact, 75-80% of people infected with Zika virus will not display any symptoms. Following the bite of an infected mosquito, those people who display symptoms, within 3–12 days, will develop **fever, joint and muscle pain, skin rash, conjunctivitis and headache**. In rare instances, neurological and autoimmune complications have been reported, such as encephalitis and Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Recommendations: **Pregnant women and those considering becoming pregnant** should discuss travel plans with their health care provider and consider **postponing travel** to areas where the Zika virus is circulating in the Americas. If travel cannot be postponed then strict mosquito bite prevention measures should be followed due to the possible association between Zika virus infection and infants born with microcephaly. Updated PHAC Travel Notices are available at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/notices-avis/notices-avis-eng.php?id=143>

Testing for Zika virus: For information on specimen collection and testing indications please visit <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/LaboratoryServices/Pages/Zika-Virus.aspx>

Should you have any questions, please contact the Health Unit and ask to speak with a nurse in the Communicable Disease Control, Epidemiology and Evaluation Department.

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