NJDOH Testing Criteria for Zika Virus – March 22, 2017

This document provides current eligibility criteria and procedures for requesting testing for Zika virus at the New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL).

Patients who meet any of the following criteria are eligible for testing:

1. Anyone who has, or has recently experienced, at least one Zika compatible symptom and who meets exposure criteria (below). Zika compatible symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis.
2. Pregnant women who meet exposure criteria, whether or not they have Zika symptoms.
3. Infants born to mothers with laboratory evidence of Zika virus infection, or for whom a Zika virus exposure is suspected but there are no laboratory results.
4. Persons who may have been exposed to Zika virus through other less common routes, such as blood transfusion, organ transplant, laboratory or healthcare setting exposures, or suspected local transmission.

Exposure Criteria (must be within 12 weeks of specimen collection date):

1. Travel to an area with active Zika virus transmission or designated by CDC as a "Zika Cautionary Area;" countries and areas with Zika virus transmission are posted online at https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-information
    a. "Active Zika virus transmission" includes countries with a CDC Zika travel notice. Travel to other countries with Zika risk, but where a CDC travel notice is not in effect may be considered a travel exposure for testing purposes if the traveler has Zika-compatible symptoms or if there are clinical concerns related to pregnancy.
    b. Zika cautionary areas are locations within the United States for which CDC has issued Zika travel guidance https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html.
2. Sexual exposure (i.e. unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex, or sharing of sex toys) with a partner who traveled to or resides in a Zika-affected area, or who was confirmed to be infected with Zika virus
3. Suspected congenital transmission
4. Laboratory or healthcare setting exposure
5. Blood transfusion or organ transplant recipient
6. Suspected local transmission
7. Other novel route of exposure

Symptoms: Common Zika-compatible symptoms include fever, rash, arthralgia, and conjunctivitis. Other symptoms include headache, myalgia, and retro-orbital pain. Rarely, neurological symptoms have also been reported.

Available Zika Virus Tests: For information on Zika virus testing at PHEL, refer to the Diagnostic Testing Algorithm for Individuals Suspected of Exposure to Zika Virus: http://www.nj.gov/health/phel/documents/zika_algorithm_march2017.pdf.

Timeframe for Testing:

Due to the limitations of available testing methodologies, test requests will only be approved for specimens drawn within 12 weeks of the last potential Zika virus exposure.

Timeframe for Calculating Sexual Exposure:

Sexual Exposure

*It is unknown how long Zika virus persists in semen. CDC advises that men with exposure to Zika virus wait 6 months before attempting conception (*https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/women-and-their-partners.html*). For the purpose of requesting testing, a man with a Zika exposure is considered potentially infectious during that 6-month period. As such, a patient with a sexual exposure would meet timeframe criteria if there was unprotected sexual contact with a male in this 6-month period. Unprotected sexual contact with a female partner would meet timeframe criteria if contact occurred within 8 weeks after the female partner's last exposure.*

For example, if a man returned from a Zika affected area in January and there was unprotected sexual contact in May, the man's sexual partner would be eligible for Zika virus testing if specimens were collected 12 weeks after the sexual exposure date in May, assuming other testing criteria are met.

Testing Approval Steps:

Except for infant testing where congenital transmission is suspected, providers should contact the local health department where the patient resides during routine business hours to discuss Zika virus testing. A directory of local health departments in New Jersey can be found at http://localhealth.nj.gov.

Providers may choose to complete and fax the Zika Virus Patient Information Worksheet (http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/zika/techinfo.shtml) to the local health department to expedite testing requests.

If the patient is eligible for testing, the local health department will provide the PHEL SRD-1 specimen submission form and July 2016 PHEL Technical Bulletin to the provider. The patient must bring the physician's test order/script and the approved SRD-1 form to **a hospital-based clinical laboratory** for specimen collection. Serum and urine specimens are required. Test results will be faxed by PHEL to the provider (using the fax number on the SRD-1 form) and provided to the local health department through CDRSS. Providers should contact PHEL with questions on pending laboratory test results at zika.phel@doh.nj.gov or 609-530-8516.

There is no charge for testing done through PHEL (although the hospital-based clinical laboratory may charge a drawing fee).

If patients are not eligible for testing at PHEL, providers may also consider testing through commercial laboratories. Patients who go to a commercial laboratory may be charged a fee.

Newborn Testing Procedures:

Newborn Testing:

For infants with suspected congenital transmission, providers should contact the NJ Communicable Disease Service (CDS) at 609-826-5964 during business hours to discuss testing. Specimens should be collected within 2 days of delivery, but may be accepted after that time. CDS will provide forms and instructions for specimen collection and shipping. 1.5-2.0 ml of serum and 3.0ml of urine are required for testing.

PHEL Newborn/Tissue Specimen Instructions:
http://www.nj.gov/health/phel/documents/zika_supp_tech_bulletin_march2017.pdf*)*

Providers should contact CDS in advance of the estimated delivery date to coordinate testing approvals.