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February 8, 2016

ZIKA VIRUS

What is the Zika virus?

Zika is a disease caused by the Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.

How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, the same mosquito that spreads Chikungunya and dengue. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and they can also bite at night. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is found who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk for infection, including pregnant women.

Does Zika virus infection in pregnant women cause birth defects?

There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with the virus while pregnant.

Testing for Zika virus

If patient is suspected to have been exposed to the Zika virus, contact Louisiana Office of Public Health, Region 5, speak to Jose Antonio Serrano at 1-504-568-8292. He will determine whether testing is necessary.

It would be helpful to have the information below before calling LOPH:

- Symptoms
- Date of onset of illness
- Country of travel
- Week of gestation (if pregnant)
- History of previous infection with Zika virus
- History of Yellow Fever vaccination

If Louisiana Office of Public Health decides testing is necessary

Call the Path Lab at 337-436-9557 and inform them that Zika testing is necessary. Provide the receptionist with your patient information. Send the patient to the Path Lab with written orders.

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