

April 7th, 2016

Dear Health Care Provider,

Zika Virus Update #2

An initial letter regarding clinical information on Zika virus was sent to health care providers on Feb. 11th, 2016.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has recently revised their recommendations to Canadians regarding the prevention of Zika virus. I refer you to my Feb. 11th letter for detailed background information on Zika virus as well information on the management of pregnant women who have recently travelled to an area affected by the current Zika outbreak.

Prevention

The risk of Zika virus occurring in Canada remains very low as the mosquito vector is not suited to our climate.

Travelers to areas affected by the current outbreak should protect themselves during both day and night from mosquito bites by using appropriate insect repellent, wearing protective clothing and using mosquito nets and screened doors/windows. **PHAC is now recommending that those who are pregnant or considering pregnancy avoid travel to areas affected by the current outbreak.** If travel cannot be postponed, strict mosquito bite prevention measures should be followed to protect themselves against bites. There is no vaccine at present for Zika virus.

There is some evidence that Zika virus can be transmitted sexually and therefore as a precaution (changed or new recommendations bolded):

- men who have travelled to an area affected by the current Zika outbreak should, for **six (6)** months after their return, use condoms with any partner who could become pregnant.
- women wishing to become pregnant should wait at least two months after their return from a Zika affected area before trying to conceive.
- **women who are pregnant should, for the duration of their pregnancy, avoid sexual intercourse or use condoms with have male partners who have recently travelled in areas affected by the current Zika outbreak.**

Testing

Given the uncertain benefit of testing and limitations in testing methods, testing of non-pregnant females and all male returning travelers is still not routinely recommended, including for those who have concerns regarding possible sexual transmission. If testing is felt to be necessary that should be discussed with an Infectious Diseases specialist (QE II locating 902-473-2222/0).

There is no specific antiviral treatment for Zika virus.

The PHAC website has additional information and updated information on affected countries.

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2016/zika-eng.php?id=zika_virus_16_hcdns

Detailed recommendations on the prevention and treatment of Zika virus from the Committee to Advise on Tropical Medicine and Travel are at:

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/committee-statement-treatment-prevention-zika-declaration-comite-traitement-prevention/index-eng.php>

Further information for health providers in Nova Scotia will be communicated as needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Strang', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Robert Strang MD, MHSc., FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health