

## Important Information on the Zika Virus

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a number of news releases and “Guidelines” regarding the Zika virus outbreak and specifically what risks exist for women who are pregnant or who wish to conceive. The concern primarily revolves around the observation that women who become infected with this virus in pregnancy are at increased risk of having their baby develop microcephaly, which is a birth defect that involves an underdeveloped head with incomplete brain development as well as other neurologic abnormalities.

The virus is spread to humans from the bite of a mosquito. The particular species of mosquito that carries this virus lives primarily in more tropical climates than the United States. So far most of the effected individuals with this condition in the United States had traveled outside the US and were infected in foreign countries. Recently, however, a number of cases have been reported from Florida where the infection occurred. It has also been shown that this virus has been found in the semen of men who were first infected from a mosquito bite. This raises the possibility that the virus can be spread by sexual contact and not by the mosquito bite alone.

So far, there is not a vaccine to prevent the infection, and no specific treatment for individuals who have become infected. The symptoms of infection (which are listed on the CDC website below) are difficult to discern from a common cold. It is possible to perform a blood test to see if a person is infected with the virus, but it may not be 100% accurate. Routine Zika virus testing is not currently recommended for women or men with possible Zika exposure without clinical illness who are attempting pregnancy. For now, the best possible advice seems to be to avoid the affected areas of the world where this virus could infect a pregnant woman or a woman anticipating a possible pregnancy. If travel to these areas is necessary, common practices to avoid mosquito bites such as long clothing and insect sprays are advisable.

Independent of the risks of infection to a developing fetus, a neurologic condition called Guillain-Barré syndrome has been reportedly linked to this same virus. Guillain-Barré syndrome is a condition where the immune system attacks parts of the nervous system producing symptoms that often starts as tingling and weakness in the extremities. Eventually it can produce symptoms such as difficulty walking or even paralysis or rarely, death. As such, avoidance of this infection is a priority even in individuals not concerned with pregnancy.

It is extremely important for everyone to understand that the facts regarding the risks, transmission, prevention, detection, and treatment appear to be constantly changing as the CDC learns more about this infection and changes their recommendations based on this information. As such, it is critical for **YOU** to take responsibility for keeping updated by accessing reliable information outlets such as those provided by the CDC (see website below). You must frequently check the website. [www.CDC.gov/zika/pregnancy](http://www.CDC.gov/zika/pregnancy). This specialized information changes very frequently, and it is not possible for Rocky Mountain Center for Reproductive Medicine to keep up with all of these changes and notify everyone as these changes are made.

On this website you will find valuable information regarding the locations that are experiencing outbreaks of this virus infection and thus merit travel restrictions. For now it would seem best for both women who are or may become pregnant, as well as their partners, to simply avoid travel to these areas. As of 9/30/2016, the CDC has issued recent guidelines, including the following;

- #1. For women diagnosed with the Zika virus (as determined by bloodwork at the department of health), they should avoid pregnancy for at least eight weeks and men should avoid pregnancy for at least six months.
- #2. For women possibly exposed with the Zika virus, (as determined by living in or travel to effected regions), pregnancy should be avoided for at least 8 weeks.
- #3. For men possibly exposed with the Zika virus, (as determined by living in or travel to effected regions), pregnancy should be avoided for at least 6 months.
- #4. Women should use a condom or abstain from sex for at least 6 months if their partner may have been exposed to the virus.

**Travel history concerning the Zika virus**

As you should be aware, the Zika virus is a concern to pregnant patients or those wishing to become pregnant. As such, the "Important Information on the Zika Virus" handout was prepared and given to you so as to decrease your risk of having an adversely effected baby. In keeping with this, we need to know if you or your partner have traveled or plan to travel to an area where the Zika virus has infected people. It is our strongest recommendation that you do not travel to areas affected by the Zika virus when pregnant or attempting conception!! It is your responsibility to inform us immediately if you do not adhere to these recommendations. If you and/or your partner plan to travel to an area effected by the Zika virus you MUST discuss with Dr Bachus beforehand the risks and consequences to you and/or any child conceived.

Please answer the following questions prior to your visit today.

- 1. Have you or your partner traveled to an area effected by the Zika virus in the last six months? Yes or No
- 2. If you or your partner did travel to an area effected by the Zika virus, did you experience symptoms of a Zika virus infection? Yes or No
- 3. Do you or your partner plan to travel to an area effected by the Zika virus while attempting a conception? Yes or No

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the information contained herein, I have received a copy of this document, and I and/or my partner will promptly inform you if either of us plans to travel to an area effected by the Zika virus while attempting to conceive and under your medical care. I will also will be certain that my partner understands this information and the information below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Patient Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

I also understand that if I continue to attempt conception despite traveling to a Zika affected area and understand that if I or my partner have not waited the appropriate safe interval of time defined above that I could have a severely effected baby. I accept those risks and desire to have Dr. Bachus and his staff assist with a conception despite these risks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Patient Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

As one of the staff of Rocky Mountain Center for Reproductive Medicine, by my signature, I indicate that the forgoing document was read, discussed, and signed in my presence, and the patient is aware that Dr. Bachus will be available to answer any questions prior to signing, or at any other time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

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