



Louisiana Department of Health Informational Bulletin 16-12

Revised August 11, 2016

Prevention of the Zika Virus in Louisiana

The purpose of this Informational Bulletin is to inform Louisiana Medicaid associated agencies, providers and stakeholders about the potential health risks to Louisiana Medicaid beneficiaries from the Zika virus.

Zika Virus Background

Zika virus disease (Zika) is caused by the Zika virus, and is commonly spread through the bite of an infected mosquito (*Aedes* species). Zika can also be transmitted via sexual contact (in semen), mother to child and blood transfusion. Common symptoms of Zika include fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes. Most infected people don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they rarely die of Zika. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected. Zika infection during pregnancy can cause very serious birth defects such as microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. It has also been linked to problems in infants such as eye defects, hearing loss and impaired growth.

Louisiana has had confirmed cases of Zika in travelers to the state. Local transmission has not yet been documented, but we do have the mosquitos that transmit Zika in the summer months. Therefore, it is imperative to focus our efforts on the prevention and diagnosis of Zika disease among women of child bearing age and men.

Prevention through Family Planning Services and Prevention of Exposure

Family Planning

For pregnant women with a male partner who has traveled to an area of active Zika transmission or has been diagnosed with Zika, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends:

- Use condoms consistently and correctly or abstain from sex for the duration of the pregnancy.
- Sex includes vaginal, anal and oral (mouth-to-penis) sex.

For women of child bearing age and men who have been to an area with Zika, the CDC recommends:

- If the woman has symptoms, use condoms or abstain after symptoms starts for at least eight weeks.
- If the woman has no symptoms, use condoms or abstain for at least eight weeks after exposure.
- If the man has symptoms, use condoms or abstain after symptoms start for at least six months.
- If the man has no symptoms, use condoms or abstain for at least eight weeks and talk to your healthcare provider.

Prevention of Exposure

Pregnant women and Medicaid beneficiaries of child bearing age should take steps to prevent mosquito bites by avoiding travel to areas with Zika, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, utilizing window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside, staying away from mosquito breeding sites such as areas of standing water, and using EPA registered insect repellents as directed.

- ✓ Coverage of condoms for Medicaid beneficiaries of child bearing age.
- ✓ Medicaid providers are alerted that it is imperative to counsel about sexual transmission prevention among women of child bearing age and men.
- ✓ Medicaid providers are alerted to counsel Medicaid beneficiaries of child bearing age on repellent use and mosquito exposure prevention strategies.
- ✓ Coverage of certain EPA registered insect repellents when prescribed for:
 - All pregnant women or
 - Medicaid beneficiaries (women and men ages 14-44) who are trying to conceive.

Detection of Zika Infection

The CDC currently recommends testing for Zika among people with Zika symptoms **and** among women who are pregnant and have traveled to a Zika affected area or have had unprotected sex with a man who has recently traveled to a Zika affected area regardless of whether she is symptomatic. To view the affected areas visit: (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/active-countries.html>)

Louisiana Medicaid Services

- ✓ Coverage of Zika testing for the following Medicaid Beneficiaries:
 - Members who traveled to an area with Zika and have symptoms.
 - Pregnant women who traveled to an area with Zika or have had unprotected sex with a man who has recently traveled to a Zika affected area.

Take Home Points

It is imperative that we prevent Zika infection among pregnant women, as the social and economic implications of Zika disease among the unborn and infants is massive. Consequences of Zika disease among this vulnerable population is enormously costly, in terms of disability, long term services and human harm.

According to the CDC and Kaiser family foundation, the lifetime cost of care for a single child with microcephaly may range from \$1 million to \$10 million.

Zika is a reportable disease in Louisiana. If you suspect Zika, immediately contact the Louisiana Office of Public Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology hotline 1-800-256-2748 for testing.

Visit the CDC website addressing Zika among pregnant women: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/tools.html>