



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van Mitchell, Secretary

March 25, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

We want to make you aware of new Zika virus-related guidance issued today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In particular, CDC has issued: 1. new guidance for healthcare professionals for counseling patients about pregnancy planning and the timing of pregnancy after possible exposure to Zika virus; and 2. updated interim guidance for preventing sexual transmission with information about how long men and women should consider using condoms or not having sex.

Links to the complete new guidance documents are posted on the DHMH Zika webpage (<http://phpa.dhmmh.maryland.gov/pages/zika.aspx>), but are summarized as follows:

1. Interim guidance for pregnant and reproductive age women

For women and men who have been diagnosed with Zika virus or who have symptoms of Zika including fever, rash, joint pain or red eyes after possible exposure to Zika virus, CDC recommends healthcare providers advise:

- Women wait at least 8 weeks after their symptoms first appeared before trying to get pregnant.
- Men wait at least 6 months after their symptoms first appeared to have unprotected sex.
- In making these recommendations, CDC reportedly considered the longest known risk period for these categories and then allowed for three times the known period of time.

For men and women **without** symptoms of Zika virus but who had possible exposure to Zika from recent travel or sexual contact, CDC recommends healthcare providers advise their patients to wait at least 8 weeks after their possible exposure before trying to get pregnant in order to minimize risk.

2. Updated interim guidance for preventing sexual transmission of Zika

The CDC recommendations for men who live in or travel to an area with active Zika virus transmission and who have a pregnant partner remain the same: use condoms every time they have sex or not have sex for the duration of the pregnancy. As they note, to be effective, condoms must be used correctly from start to finish, every time during sex, including vaginal, anal or oral (mouth-to-penis) sex.

The updated guidance now includes timeframes for men and their non-pregnant partners based on the couple's situation, including whether the man lives in or has traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission and whether he develops symptoms of possible Zika infection. CDC states that the guidance is based on available information about how long the virus remains in semen and the risks associated with Zika based on whether or not men had symptoms of infection:

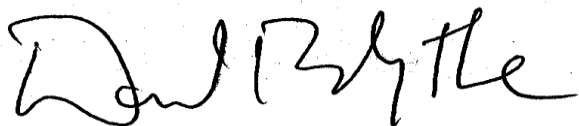
Couples with men who have confirmed Zika or symptoms of Zika should consider using condoms or not having sex for **at least 6 months** after symptoms begin. This includes men who live in and men who traveled to areas with Zika.

Couples with men who traveled to an area with Zika but did not develop symptoms of Zika should consider using condoms or not having sex for **at least 8 weeks** after their return in order to minimize risk.

CDC also recommends that couples who do not want to get pregnant should use the most effective contraceptive methods that they can use consistently and correctly, and they should also use condoms to prevent the sexual transmission of Zika. Couples who are trying to get pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider.

We appreciate that much new information is being learned about Zika and that some of that affects clinical decision-making. We're committed to getting that information out to you as quickly as possible. As always, thanks for your work dealing with this and other urgent infectious disease issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Blythe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Blythe" clearly distinguishable.

David Blythe, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist and Director,
DHMH Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau