



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH urges pregnant women and women planning to become pregnant to avoid travel to Zika-affected countries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"The Alabama Department of Public Health strongly urges that pregnant women and women planning to become pregnant not travel to any Zika-affected country due to the risk of severe birth defects and other pregnancy complications," State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said.

Congenital microcephaly, a condition characterized by an abnormally small head, has been recognized in large numbers of newborns in Brazil since the onset of the current Zika outbreak. A list of countries experiencing Zika outbreaks can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/>.

Any pregnant woman who has traveled to a Zika-affected area during pregnancy should be evaluated and tested, regardless of symptoms. Pregnant women whose male sex partners have traveled to an area with Zika need to be concerned about sexual transmission of the Zika virus and the male should use condoms every time or not have sex during the entire pregnancy.

Couples considering becoming pregnant should seek counseling and consider postponing travel to a Zika-affected area. For individuals who traveled to a Zika-affected area and have been diagnosed with Zika or who have had symptoms consistent with Zika (fever, rash, joint pain or red eyes), ADPH advises women to wait at least eight weeks after symptoms first appear before trying to get pregnant and men to wait at least six months after symptoms first occur before trying to get their partner pregnant. For individuals who traveled to a Zika-affected area but did not develop symptoms consistent with Zika, both women and men should consider using condoms or not having sex for at least eight weeks after returning from travel before attempting a pregnancy.

The current understanding is that the virus can persist for an extended period of time in semen. That is why there is a longer time frame for the male recommendation. These recommendations are based on updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eighty percent of people infected with Zika will not experience symptoms. Couples should discuss these recommendations with their physician or other healthcare provider.

In general, any person who has traveled to a Zika-affected area and has developed symptoms during travel or within two weeks after return should seek medical follow-up and evaluation for possible Zika virus testing. Testing for Zika virus is not currently recommended or being performed for asymptomatic men because a negative test does not change the guidance for condom use or not having sex.

For more information, visit adph.org.

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