



February 11, 2016

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Medical Officers of Health

All Health Care Providers

**Re: Information and resources on Zika virus infection**

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The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on Zika virus and share resources which reflect the current state of our knowledge on this disease.

Nothing is more important to our government than the health and safety of Ontarians. Together with the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Health Ontario, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and other national and international partners, our ministry has been monitoring and assessing Zika virus.

From the beginning of the outbreak in Central and South America, we have taken steps to ensure our health system and our partners are prepared should a returning traveler be suspected of having Zika virus. That includes working with Public Health Agency of Canada and Public Health Ontario to ensure Ontarians suspected of having been infected with Zika virus are tested.

Public Health Ontario Laboratories (PHOL) forwards all Ontario specimens for Zika virus testing to National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg. PHOL are also concurrently testing these specimens for Chikungunya and Dengue, two viruses that can cause a similar illness to Zika virus. Since October 2015, locally-acquired cases of Zika virus infection have been reported and are increasing in a number of Central and South American countries. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has issued Public Health Notices and Travel Health Notices, which are updated regularly. These notices are available on PHAC's website at:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2016/zika-eng.php>

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/notices-avis/notices-avis-eng.php?id=143>

The speed with which the Zika virus situation is unfolding is surpassed only by the increased need for reliable and consistent technical and scientific information.

The risk to travellers to countries affected by Zika virus is low. However, pregnant women and those considering becoming pregnant, should take special precautions and consider postponing travel to areas where the Zika virus is circulating. If travel cannot be postponed, then strict mosquito bite prevention measures should be followed. Canadian Blood Services have instituted donor deferral policies to prevent the potential for transfusion-associated transmission. The ministry, in conjunction with Public Health Ontario (PHO), is monitoring the evolving evidence on sexual transmission of Zika virus, with current recommendations on the prevention of sexual transmission found in the CATMAT guide referred to below.

PCR and serology testing for Zika virus infections are currently performed by the PHAC's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML). Access to information on indications and procedures for such testing can be obtained via the link to the PHO Laboratory Test Information Sheet provided below. Individuals who have traveled to Zika affected countries or have concerns about contracting Zika virus should consult with their health care provider.

Attached is a Question and Answer document on Zika virus infection, developed by PHO in collaboration with the ministry. This document is also available on PHO's website at:

<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/BrowseByTopic/InfectiousDiseases/Pages/IDLandingPages/Zika-Virus-Infection.aspx>

Other resources include:

CATMAT Guide, *Canadian Recommendations on the Prevention and Treatment of Zika Virus*:  
<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/committee-statement-treatment-prevention-zika-declaration-comite-traitement-prevention/index-eng.php>

PHAC Guide, *Laboratory Testing Recommendations for Zika Virus*:  
[http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/laboratory-testing-zika-analyse-laboratoire/index-eng.php?id=zika\\_virus\\_16\\_hcdns](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/laboratory-testing-zika-analyse-laboratoire/index-eng.php?id=zika_virus_16_hcdns)

PHO Test Information Sheet:  
<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/LaboratoryServices/Pages/Zika-Virus.aspx>

As we learn more regarding several aspects of the virus and the infection itself, we will continue to provide you with updated information and post that information on our website.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eric Hoskins  
Minister



Graham L. Pollett, MD, MHSc, FRCPC  
Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health

c. Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health Division