



# MARYLAND Department of Health

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis Schrader, Secretary

November 21, 2017

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to provide updated information about Maryland Department of Health's (MDH) Zika testing recommendations in the context of recently updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In July, CDC released [updated guidance for health care providers caring for pregnant women with possible Zika virus exposure](#) that includes new recommendations for *who* should be routinely tested and *which tests* should be performed for persons who are being tested. In October, CDC released [updated guidance for the diagnosis, evaluation, and management of infants with possible congenital Zika virus infection](#). In addition to recommendations regarding Zika testing in infants, this guidance outlines important recommendations regarding clinical evaluations, including physical exam, vision screening, developmental monitoring and hearing screening.

MDH's updated guidance incorporates most of the CDC's recent guidance, and we have outlined some of the more significant changes in our recommendations below. A complete summary of updated MDH recommendations for Zika virus testing is available in the attached document, and online at [zika.maryland.gov](http://zika.maryland.gov) under "Information for Clinicians." Decisions regarding MDH's updated recommendations for Zika testing were informed by clinical and laboratory-based considerations, discussions with representatives from the healthcare community, as well as Maryland-specific epidemiologic and logistical considerations.

- 1) MDH recommends that Maryland providers no longer routinely test asymptomatic pregnant women without ongoing exposure.** In line with CDC guidance, this recommendation takes into account that there is decreasing prevalence of Zika virus throughout the Americas, and consequently a greater risk for increasing numbers of false positive tests. MDH, however, emphasizes that testing should be considered using a shared patient-provider decision-making model.
- 2) MDH recommends that Maryland providers no longer routinely test infants without abnormalities born to mothers with Zika virus exposure, but without lab evidence of Zika virus infection.** Health care providers should remain alert for abnormal findings (e.g., postnatal-onset microcephaly and eye abnormalities without microcephaly) in infants with possible congenital Zika virus exposure without apparent abnormalities at birth. The group of mothers referenced in this testing recommendation includes mothers who were never tested during pregnancy as well as those whose test result was negative. In line with CDC guidance, this recommendation is based on the recognition of the unknown sensitivity and specificity of currently available diagnostic tests for congenital Zika virus infection, and additional clinical findings associated with congenital Zika virus infection.

- 3) **MDH recommends that Maryland providers no longer routinely test placental tissues for Zika virus for women who have a live born infant with no evidence of possible Zika virus-associated birth defects.** MDH continues to recommend placenta testing when a fetal or newborn abnormality is detected. In these cases, placenta should be submitted to MDH Laboratories Administration, who will send the tissue to CDC for testing. Testing of placental and fetal tissues may also be considered on a case by case basis for pregnancies resulting in a miscarriage or fetal loss.
- 4) **All Zika testing for symptomatic patients and for infants for whom testing is indicated should continue to be performed at the MDH Laboratories Administration.** However, Zika testing for asymptomatic adult patients for whom testing is indicated may now be performed at commercial laboratories. If resources are unavailable for commercial testing for a patient who falls in this category, the MDH Laboratories Administration remains available to perform testing with prior approval. Positive tests from commercial laboratories will be confirmed at the MDH Laboratories Administration. All non-negative IgM test results will be confirmed by plaque reduction neutralization tests (PRNT) at the CDC.
- 5) **MDH recommends that individuals for whom testing is indicated should be tested using concurrent nucleic acid amplification tests (i.e., PCR), and IgM serological tests.**
- 6) **MDH Laboratories Administration will continue to offer Zika testing with prior approval by calling state health department personnel at 410-767-6700** (or after hours at 410-795-7365). Previously, testing approval was conducted primarily by local health departments.
- 7) **All specimens submitted to MDH Laboratories Administration MUST include fully completed paperwork, or testing will not be performed.** Please review the attached detailed diagram outlining how to appropriately complete the serologic testing form. Laboratory guidance documents are also available online at [zika.maryland.gov](http://zika.maryland.gov) under "Lab Testing Guidance."

Please see the attached table for MDH's detailed recommendations or online at [zika.maryland.gov](http://zika.maryland.gov) under "Information for Clinicians."

Please continue to contact the MDH Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau at (410) 767-6700 if you have questions or concerns related to Zika testing.

Attachments:

- (1) MDH Zika Testing Guidelines Table
- (2) Zika Testing Lab Form Instructions

Sincerely,



Monique Duwell, MD, MPH