



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

September 2016

Dear Provider,

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is taking action to prevent Zika virus infection in pregnant women. This letter is to invite your practice to order Zika Awareness Kits for your pregnant patients who are at risk for Zika virus.

Zika virus is spread primarily through infected mosquitos but has also been shown to spread through unprotected sexual activity, and may be present in semen for many months after infection. Zika virus can be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Infection with Zika virus during pregnancy has been causally linked to microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects as well as congenital problems in infants, including eye defects, hearing loss, and impaired growth. Travel to Zika-affected areas* presents an increased risk for infection. For these reasons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DOHMH recommend that women who are pregnant, and sexual partners of women who are pregnant, avoid travel to these areas.

DOHMH has developed a Zika Awareness Kit to assist you in educating your pregnant patients who must travel, or whose sexual partner must travel to Zika-affected areas. The NYC Zika Awareness Kit includes the following items:

- **Insect repellent:** Insect repellent should be used during travel to Zika-affected areas. Insect repellents are safe during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Repellent use should be continued for three weeks after returning from travel to ensure that Zika virus is not transmitted to another person through mosquito bites.
- **Condoms:** Condoms should be used consistently and correctly during vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex with a partner who traveled to a Zika-affected area for the duration of pregnancy.
- **Travel Warning Flyer:** Travel to Zika-affected areas should be postponed, but if travel is necessary, this flyer describes the risk of travel and ways to avoid mosquito bites.

To order Zika Awareness Kits, please call 311 and state that you are a medical provider and would like to order “Zika Awareness Kits” for your practice. Let the operator know how many kits you wish to order. Please order in increments of 10 up to a maximum of 40 kits per order and limit distribution of these kits to pregnant patients who cannot avoid travel to Zika-affected areas during their pregnancy.

Thank you for your commitment to the health of your pregnant patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay K. Varma".

Jay K. Varma, MD
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Disease Control, New York City Health Department

*See the CDC website for the current list of areas with active Zika virus transmission at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>