



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

## 2016 DOHMH Advisory #4: How to Obtain Zika Virus Testing at the New York City Public Health Laboratory

*Please share with your colleagues in Obstetrics/Gynecology, Maternal/Fetal Medicine, Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Urgent Care, Pediatrics, Neonatology, Infectious Disease, and Neurology.*

- **The guidance below only applies for residents of New York City (NYC).**
  - For non-NYC residents, providers should call the local health department based on the patient's residence and refer to New York State Department of Health guidance for testing:  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/zika\\_virus/](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/zika_virus/).
- **Providers do not need pre-approval from the NYC Health Department to test NYC residents for Zika virus who are:**
  - Pregnant women who traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\* during their pregnancy
  - Non-pregnant persons who developed Zika compatible symptoms within 4 weeks of travel to an area with Zika virus transmission\*
- **Providers can submit specimens directly to the NYC Public Health Laboratory for patients who meet testing criteria. Submitters must follow the attached laboratory guidelines** (See the Zika Virus Provider page at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/reporting-and-services.page>)
- **Providers should continue to call the Health Department through the Provider Access Line (1-866-692-3641) to report NYC patients who meet the following criteria:**
  - Microcephaly or intracranial calcifications diagnosed prenatally or at birth if the mother traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\* while pregnant
  - Persons with Guillain-Barré syndrome who recently traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\*
- **Providers who are unable to arrange testing and specimen transport through their affiliated hospital laboratories can call the Provider Access Line for assistance with specimen transport during business hours**

February 12, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Health care providers no longer need to call the NYC Health Department for pre-approval to submit serum and urine specimens to the NYC Public Health Laboratory as long as the patient is a NYC resident who meets one of the following criteria:

- Pregnant women who traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\* while pregnant
- Non-pregnant persons who develop any Zika-compatible symptom during or within 4 weeks of travel from an area with Zika virus transmission\* (Symptoms include: acute onset of fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgia, or conjunctivitis)

Providers should continue to call the Provider Access Line (1-866-692-3641) for the following:

- Fetal microcephaly or intracranial calcifications found on prenatal ultrasound in a woman who traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\* during pregnancy

\*See CDC website for most up to date list of areas with active Zika virus transmission at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>

- Infant with microcephaly or intracranial calcifications born to a mother who traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission\* while pregnant.
- Persons with Guillain-Barré syndrome who recently traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission
- Requests for testing patients who do not meet the above criteria

#### How to obtain testing for Zika virus infection for New York City residents

At this time, testing for Zika virus infection is not available through commercial laboratories. **If testing is indicated, clinicians should collect appropriate specimens and arrange for transportation of specimens to their affiliated hospital laboratories or, if not affiliated with a hospital, directly to the Public Health Laboratory.** Detailed instructions for submission of specimens and the [form to submit serum and urine specimens for Zika testing](#) are available at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/reporting-and-services.page>.

#### **Important notes about specimen collection:**

- Because specimens need to be centrifuged and frozen to -70 °C within 6 hours of collection, providers affiliated with hospitals should submit specimens through their hospital laboratories to facilitate timely specimen handling.
- The NYC Health Department can provide assistance for arranging specimen transport for providers who are not affiliated with a healthcare facility that can meet specimen processing, handling, and transport requirements.
  - Assistance with transport to the Public Health Laboratory is available only during business hours on weekdays by calling the NYC Provider Access Line (1-866-692-3641). Assistance with transport is not available during weekends, nights or city/federal holidays.
  - If your facility is unable to process specimens, please arrange to see any patient needing Zika testing during weekday mornings so transport to the Public Health Laboratory can be arranged in time to get the specimen centrifuged and frozen within 6 hours of collection.
  - If your patient is being seen on the weekend, your patient has symptoms compatible with acute infection within the past 7 days, and your facility does not have the capacity to centrifuge, freeze, and transport specimens, then you should refer the patient to a healthcare facility that can centrifuge, freeze, and transport specimens.

Health education materials on Zika, especially for pregnant women, are available on our website at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/zika-virus.page>.

As always, we appreciate your continued collaboration with our efforts in New York City.

Sincerely,

*Jay K. Varma, MD*

Jay K. Varma, MD

Deputy Commissioner

Division of Disease Control, New York City Health Department