



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH News Release

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van T. Mitchell, Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maryland announces first confirmed case of Zika virus infection

Resident's infection was confirmed through a blood test

Baltimore, MD (February 11, 2016) – The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is announcing its first confirmed case of a Marylander being infected with the Zika virus. The mosquito-borne virus has caused the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to issue travel warnings for pregnant women.

The patient had traveled to a country where Zika transmission has been active and ongoing. A blood test confirmed that the patient had Zika.

“Our department will continue to actively partner with the CDC, Maryland healthcare providers, laboratories, and health departments to provide support to Marylanders at risk of Zika infection – especially to pregnant women,” said Secretary Van T. Mitchell. “As CDC guidance has evolved, we actually have expanded access to testing for people who had not met that agency's initial testing criteria.”

Health and Mental Hygiene is monitoring the latest developments related to the virus, and is in frequent communication with the CDC. The department regularly communicates with and distributes guidance to Maryland hospitals, healthcare providers and the public. The Department is maintaining situational awareness and facilitating testing of individuals who have traveled to areas with ongoing Zika transmission – with an emphasis on pregnant women.

Health and Mental Hygiene encourages Marylanders who have questions about how their travel histories might affect their risk to consult their physicians.

Marylanders and other travelers to our area returning from regions with ongoing Zika transmission, such as the Caribbean and Central and South America, may have been exposed to the virus. As such, the arrival of travelers makes it likely that Maryland will see confirmed cases of infection. According to the CDC, the virus chiefly is transmitted by mosquito, though there

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also have been reports of transmission through blood transfusion and sexual contact.

Symptoms of Zika may include fever, rash, conjunctivitis and joint pain. But the CDC has emphasized that not all people who become infected with the virus display symptoms, even throughout the course of infection that can last several days to a week. The CDC says, in fact, about only one in five people will display symptoms.

The Health and Mental Hygiene public health laboratory expects to be able to test for Zika within the next week. Meanwhile, we are sending samples directly to the CDC labs for analysis. We will keep the public informed on positive tests through weekly updates. Health and Mental Hygiene's Communications Office will continue to serve as the point of contact for media inquiries into Zika updates.

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika. Persons who are concerned that they may have been exposed to Zika virus or who have symptoms of Zika virus infection should talk to their healthcare provider because symptoms of illness can be caused by a number of different ailments. Because we are in the midst of flu season, we encourage Marylanders to get a flu shot.

Health and Mental Hygiene will continue to rely on the best, most accurate and current information concerning this disease as presented and confirmed by the CDC. The CDC continues to investigate the link between Zika cases in pregnant women and infants born with microcephaly, a birth defect where a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared with those of babies of the same sex and age. Babies with microcephaly often have smaller brains that may not have developed properly.

Health and Mental Hygiene is working with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to prepare for upcoming warmer temperatures when mosquito activity will increase and where that activity could affect residents' health. As a rule, during warmer months, residents should work to eliminate standing water around their homes that could facilitate breeding grounds for the insects. Agriculture's Mosquito Control program can be found at <http://goo.gl/A1K6YP>. For more information on Zika, visit our website at <http://goo.gl/6Jz7W5> or the CDC's site at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>.

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The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is the state government agency that protects Maryland's public health. We work together to promote and improve the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management, and community engagement. Stay connected: www.twitter.com/MarylandDHMH and www.facebook.com/MarylandDHMH.