



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

2016 DOHMH Advisory #15: Interim Zika Virus Update

- **One commercial diagnostic laboratory (Quest) now offers RT-PCR testing of serum for Zika virus.**
- **For pregnant women and their male sex partners, providers should also call 866-692-3641 to arrange urine RT-PCR and serum antibody testing through the NYC Health Department's Public Health Laboratory.**

May 31, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Until recently, Zika virus testing for NYC residents has only been available through the NYC Health Department's Public Health Laboratory. One commercial laboratory (Focus Diagnostics, a subsidiary of Quest) recently began accepting serum specimens for rRT-PCR Zika testing. Providers should understand that Quest is only performing rRT-PCR on serum, not on urine. Data from CDC, NY State, and New York City indicate that urine is an essential test for the diagnosis of Zika virus infection. The virus is detectable in urine specimens for a longer period than it is in serum, as long as 29 days after symptom onset in urine compared to 7 days for serum. Most Zika cases in New York City have been diagnosed by urine. Additionally, a negative rRT-PCR on urine and/or serum cannot rule out infection and should be verified with antibody testing (serology). For women (symptomatic or asymptomatic) who were pregnant while in an affected area or who have had a potential sexual exposure to Zika virus, and for their male sex partners, antibody testing on serum should always be ordered, and rRT-PCR on both urine and serum are recommended.

Therefore, we advise providers:

- 1) When sending specimens to Quest, also collect one serum specimen and one urine specimen to send to the Health Department's Public Health Laboratory for urine rRT-PCR and, if necessary, serology testing.
- 2) Call **1-866-692-3641** to complete the testing approval and requisition process. Refer to HAN#7 for Zika virus testing guidelines (<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/zika-advisory7.pdf>).

Currently, the average turn-around-time from specimens being received at PHL to results being reported to providers is 3 days for serum PCR, 3 days for urine PCR, and 3 weeks for serology.

The effective turn-around-time for your specific clinic may be longer, because some clinical laboratories only send specimens to PHL at designated intervals, and some specimens have problems with labeling, packaging, or requisition forms that require resolution.

For more information on Zika virus, providers are encouraged to visit our website at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/reporting-and-services.page>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay K. Varma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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

1. Bingham, AM; Cone, M, Mock, V, Heberlein-Larson, L, Stanek, D, Blackmore, C, and Likos, A. Comparison of Test Results for Zika Virus RNA in Urine, Serum, and Saliva Specimens from Persons with Travel-Associated Zika Virus Disease — Florida, 2016. MMWR 2016; vol 65(18):475-78. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6518e2.htm>