



**Criteria for Obtaining Zika Virus Testing
at the New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratory
Updated April 10, 2019**

Clinicians should consult the latest CDC recommendations for Zika testing at www.cdc.gov/zika.

Testing for Zika is widely available at most commercial laboratories. The New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL) offers Zika testing if extenuating circumstances exist. This document provides current eligibility criteria and procedures for requesting testing for Zika virus at PHEL. Placental/fetal tissue and amniotic fluid testing is only available upon consultation with the New Jersey Department of Health Communicable Disease Service (Phone: 609-826-5964 or e-mail CDS.ZikaTeam@doh.nj.gov).

Eligible for testing at PHEL:

1. Persons who developed at least one Zika compatible symptom within 2 weeks of last exposure. Zika compatible symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis.
2. Pregnant women with fetal abnormalities suggestive of congenital Zika syndrome detected on ultrasound and instances of fetal loss or infant death where mother had Zika exposure
3. Infants born to mothers with laboratory evidence of Zika virus infection, or infants with abnormalities suggestive of congenital Zika syndrome for whom there are maternal risk factors
4. Persons who may have been exposed to Zika virus through other less common routes or circumstances, such as:
 - blood transfusion, organ transplant, laboratory or healthcare setting exposures, or suspected local transmission.
 - asymptomatic pregnant women who have ongoing exposure (daily or weekly travel to an area with Zika). PCR testing is recommended three times during pregnancy

Exposure Criteria (last exposure must be within 12 weeks of specimen collection date):

1. Travel to an area (or relocation from an area) with risk of Zika -- designated by CDC as either an "Area with current Zika outbreak" or a "Country or territory that has ever reported Zika cases (past or current)." Consult latest CDC Zika Risk map at: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-information>
2. Sexual exposure (i.e. unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex, or sharing of sex toys) with a partner who traveled to or resides in a Zika-affected area, or who was confirmed to be infected with Zika
3. Suspected congenital transmission
4. Laboratory or healthcare setting exposure
5. Blood transfusion or organ transplant recipient
6. Suspected local transmission
7. Other novel route of exposure

Symptoms: Common Zika-compatible symptoms include fever, rash, arthralgia, and conjunctivitis. Other symptoms include headache, myalgia, and retro-orbital pain. Rarely, neurological symptoms have also been reported, including Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Timeframe for Testing:

Due to the limitations of available testing methodologies, test requests will only be approved for specimens drawn within 12 weeks of the last potential Zika virus exposure.

Timeframe for Calculating Sexual Exposure:

When considering testing eligibility, a man with a Zika exposure is considered potentially infectious for 3 months from his last exposure. As such, unprotected sexual contact with a male partner for 3 months after the partner's travel to an area with Zika would be considered a Zika sexual exposure. Unprotected sexual contact with a female partner would meet timeframe criteria if contact occurred within 8 weeks after the female partner's last exposure.

For example, if a man returned from a Zika affected area on January 20th, the semen would be potentially infectious for 3 months, through April 20th. If there was an unprotected sexual contact on March 15th, the man's sexual partner would be eligible for Zika virus testing if specimens were collected within the 12 weeks after March 15th, assuming other testing criteria are met.

Testing Approval Steps:

Except for newborn testing at the time of delivery, providers should contact the local health department where the patient resides during routine business hours to discuss Zika virus testing. A directory of local health departments in New Jersey can be found at <http://localhealth.nj.gov>.

It is recommended that providers complete and fax the Zika Virus Patient Information Worksheet https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/zika_patient_information_worksheet.pdf to the local health department to expedite testing requests.

If the patient is eligible for testing, the local health department will provide the PHEL SRD-1 specimen submission form and PHEL Technical Bulletin to the provider. The patient must bring the physician's test order/script and the approved SRD-1 form to **a hospital-based clinical laboratory** for specimen collection. Serum and urine specimens are required. Test results will be faxed by PHEL to the provider (using the fax number on the SRD-1 form) and provided to the local health department through CDRSS. Providers should contact PHEL with questions on pending laboratory test results at zika.phel@doh.nj.gov or 609-530-8516. There is no charge for testing done through PHEL (although the hospital-based clinical laboratory may charge a drawing fee).

If patients are not eligible for testing at PHEL, providers may consider testing through commercial laboratories. Patients who go to a commercial laboratory may be charged a fee.

Newborn Testing Procedures: Birthing hospitals should refer to the NJDOH Zika Delivery Packet for recommended assessments and/or testing requests. The packet can be found on the NJDOH Zika web page <https://nj.gov/health/cd/topics/zika.shtml> on the "Resources & References" sidebar under the heading "Pregnant Women and Infants."