



News Release

John R. Kasich/ Governor
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ohio Department of Health Laboratory Begins Zika Virus Surveillance Testing

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Laboratory has begun Zika virus surveillance testing to identify suspected Zika virus infection in individuals within seven days of symptom onset.

The genetic material of the Zika virus often can be detected in blood specimens collected within seven days of symptom onset. The ODH Laboratory is using a test known as real time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR). Blood specimens tested by the ODH Laboratory will continue to be forwarded to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmatory testing.

“By conducting our own initial Zika virus testing on patients within seven days of symptom onset, we can significantly speed up initial test results for patients who are anxiously waiting on them,” said ODH Medical Director Dr. Mary DiOrio. “We anticipate sharing initial test results with submitters, such as doctors’ offices, hospitals or local health departments, within 48 hours of receiving the blood specimen.”

The rRT-PCR testing method is less effective in detecting Zika virus infection in blood specimens collected after seven days of symptom onset. Blood specimens collected after that time will continue to be forwarded to CDC for additional testing which can identify the presence of Zika virus after the seven-day time period.

ODH Laboratory tests that indicate a Zika virus infection will be considered suspected cases until confirmed by CDC, when ODH will report them as confirmed cases.

Zika virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. There is no indication that Zika virus can spread from person to person through casual contact, but it can be spread from a man to a woman through sexual transmission.

Of people infected with the Zika virus, 80 percent do not have any symptoms. When symptoms occur, they are often mild, lasting from several days to a week, and include fever, rash, joint and muscle pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), and headache. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Due to the possible association between Zika virus infections in pregnant women and certain birth defects, CDC recommends that pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas with Zika virus transmission.

For more information about the Zika virus, visit www.odh.ohio.gov/zika.

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