

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS TESTING



For Pregnant Women with Exposure to Areas with a CDC Zika Travel Notice

This informational sheet is for pregnant women living in an area with a CDC Zika travel notice, as well as those who previously lived in, had an extended stay, or frequently traveled to such an area before or during their pregnancy. If you live in an area with Zika virus, you may be at risk of getting Zika virus at any time during your pregnancy. For this reason, CDC recommends testing throughout pregnancy. If at any time you feel sick with fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes, you should see a doctor or other provider right away and be tested for Zika virus.

Zika virus testing is complex

- **You may need more than one Zika virus test:**
Finding out if you have Zika virus can require up to three different types of tests. One test looks for Zika virus genetic material, called ribonucleic acid (RNA), which can stay in the body for a couple of weeks. Another test looks for antibodies, which your body makes to fight infections. If this test detects antibodies, a third test helps healthcare providers know if the antibodies are for Zika virus or for another similar virus. You may wait different amounts of time for results of each test to come back.
- **Understanding test results can be challenging:**
 - » If you live in or traveled to an area where local mosquitoes continue to spread Zika virus, you may have been previously infected and already developed antibodies against Zika virus. Antibodies can stay in your body for different amounts of time. Because of this, antibody test results may not tell us if you were infected in the past or if you were infected recently. Possible ways to tell if you have a recent infection is if your test results show evidence of Zika virus genetic material or if you had a negative antibody test that becomes positive during pregnancy.
 - » Zika virus is similar to other viruses that are carried by mosquitoes. Testing for Zika virus may also detect antibodies to these other mosquito-borne viruses. Sometimes even after testing, we may not know which virus you were infected with. Each test result is important, because it helps your doctor or other provider decide which virus you are most likely infected with and how best to care for you during pregnancy.



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Testing for Zika Virus

RNA Testing

Your healthcare provider may order a test that looks for Zika virus RNA which can be in blood and urine.

- A positive result means that you likely have Zika virus infection.
- A negative result means another test, called an antibody test, is needed. A negative RNA test could mean that you had Zika virus but your body cleared the virus from your system, or that you never had Zika infection.

Antibody Testing

Your healthcare provider may order a test to look for antibodies. Zika virus infection, like some other similar infections, may result in antibodies staying in the body for months after infection.

- If your antibody test is negative, it means there is no evidence you were recently infected with Zika virus. Knowing this is important to help your healthcare provider understand your test results in the future.
- If your antibody test is positive, this could mean many things including
 - » Recent infection with Zika virus
 - » Previous infection with Zika virus or another similar virus
 - » Recent infection with another related virus, like dengue virus
 - » A false positive (meaning the test shows you have Zika virus when you were not actually infected).

Confirmatory Antibody Testing

If your antibody test is positive, your healthcare provider may order another test to try to confirm the antibodies are for Zika virus. However, this test may not be able to distinguish between Zika virus and a related virus (dengue virus) and will not tell if you were infected with Zika virus recently or in the past. Of the three Zika virus tests, this test requires the most time to obtain results. Your doctor or other provider will work with your state or local health department to interpret your test results.

At any time during the testing process, if your doctor doesn't have a sample of your blood or urine, you may have to give another sample.

Testing Results

Positive test results

Testing positive for Zika virus during pregnancy lets your doctor or other provider know to watch your pregnancy more closely. This means you might have more ultrasounds or have other tests to check the growth and development of your fetus and check for Zika virus infection.

Not clearly positive or negative test results

Sometimes, the tests are not clearly positive or negative. If this happens, your doctor or other provider may choose to follow the CDC recommendations for a positive test result, meaning he or she might do more ultrasounds or other tests to monitor the pregnancy.

Negative test results

Your doctor or other provider may check the growth and development of your fetus during an ultrasound and check for any signs of Zika virus infection. If there are no signs of Zika virus infection, you will get routine prenatal care, which is what CDC recommends. If your doctor or other provider sees signs of Zika virus infection during an ultrasound, then you may need additional tests to periodically check for a new infection.

