

## **Zika virus information**

The Zika virus pandemic continues to evolve. We want to update you on what we know about the public health effects of the virus and to support your efforts in providing care to Amerigroup District of Columbia, Inc. patients at risk for exposure.

In February 2016, the Zika virus was declared a worldwide health emergency. It is a mosquito-borne virus capable of causing a mild illness that is asymptomatic in most people. However, it can pose a risk for pregnant women resulting in serious birth defects — including microcephaly and other brain abnormalities. The virus can be sexually transmitted. Guillain-Barré syndrome is a rare disorder causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis — It was also reported in patients following suspected Zika virus infection.

Here are the known details about the Zika virus:

- The virus is actively transmitted in many areas — including Puerto Rico, Mexico, 20 countries in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and Africa.
- The mosquitos that carry Zika are present in 30 U.S. states. The areas that are most likely to be affected include the Gulf states and cities in southern Florida/south Texas.
- In April 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a *Special Report* in the *New England Journal of Medicine* concluding that there is a causal relationship between prenatal Zika virus and microcephaly and other neurological disorders including Guillain-Barré syndrome.
- The FDA granted emergency use approval for commercially available tests that can detect the Zika virus during the first week of symptoms. The CDC is able to perform antibody testing after the virus has left the blood stream.
- The CDC established a *Zika Registry* for pregnant women exposed to the virus.
- There is no treatment or vaccine for Zika virus infections. Medical care is directed at alleviating symptoms. The focus is on prevention of exposure by avoiding travel to areas with active Zika transmission and by protecting against mosquito bites.
- Our medical coverage includes testing and evaluation for Zika virus. We support the current recommendations of the CDC for screening, testing and management of pregnant women — including serial ultrasounds in certain scenarios.
- Recommendations on counseling, diagnosis and testing of persons exposed (including pregnant women and women considering pregnancy) can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/index.html>.
- Member information (including advice on how to avoid exposure) is attached for your information.
- For the District's Zika information, visit <http://phpa.dhmd.maryland.gov/Pages/zika.aspx>.

**Zika virus *Frequently Asked Questions* and resources are attached and can also be located on the Amerigroup provider website.**