



Zika Fever:

Enhanced Surveillance for Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Guidance for ED Managers, Registration, and Triage Staff

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www.floridahealth.gov/zika

FloridaHealth.gov • Florida Department of Health

Summary:

- **Report suspected cases of Zika fever immediately upon initial suspicion to your county health department (CHD).**
 - Reporting is required by Florida Administrative Code Emergency Rule 64DER16-1 (64D-3.029).
 - CHD contact information: www.Floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact
 - Zika fever reporting, testing, and screening guidance: www.floridahealth.gov/zika
- **For the next 60 days, for all persons presenting to EDs for care:**
 - Ask at time of initial presentation or triage: "In the last two weeks, have you traveled anywhere outside the continental U.S.?"
 - Record the name of any country(ies) along with his/her chief complaint in the chief complaint field. Please also record travel to Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.
 - Ask all women of child bearing age if they are pregnant, and record "pregnant" in the chief complaint (in addition to any countries with recent travel).

Background:

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) operates the ESSENCE-FL syndromic surveillance system. Nearly all EDs participate in ESSENCE-FL, and the system captures 95% of all ED visits in the state. Chief complaint data entered at your facility by your staff when each patient presents for care at the ED are sent to ESSENCE-FL. This information is used daily by DOH to monitor for emerging diseases, outbreaks, and other disease trends. Since symptoms of Zika fever are often mild and nonspecific, understanding the travel history of ill persons and pregnant women will help identify persons ill with Zika fever, as well as help estimate the potential burden of Zika fever and more severe complications from infection. The purpose of this surveillance is to help identify patients who have traveled recently and may have Zika fever, help ensure that appropriate laboratory tests are performed, and allow appropriate control measures to be taken for each case.

Zika fever is a dengue fever-like illness caused by the mosquito-borne Zika virus. Generally, Zika fever is a mild illness although severe disease requiring hospitalization can occur. The Ministry of Health of Brazil has reported an increase in the number of babies born with microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes in areas experiencing Zika virus outbreaks. DOH is enhancing surveillance for Zika fever because of concern about the possible introduction of Zika virus into Florida from the outbreaks of Zika fever currently occurring in numerous countries in Central and South America, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other Caribbean islands.

Guidance:

- **DOH requests that hospitals implement procedures at registration or triage to ask about any travel outside of the continental U.S. in at least the last two weeks for everyone presenting to an ED for care, regardless of chief complaint, and add the name of any identified country to the chief complaint field.** For example, "rash, travel to Brazil," or "possible Zika, travel to Colombia," or "fever and joint pain, pregnant, returning from Puerto Rico."
- **Adding country name to the chief complaint field does not replace the requirement to report suspected Zika fever cases to the CHD.**
- After 60 days, DOH will evaluate whether this enhanced surveillance effort needs to be extended.

DOH is not requesting that hospitals change their usual practices in any other way. It is understood that not all persons who become ill will present to EDs for care and not all EDs have a free-text chief complaint option in their electronic medical record system. **This effort is in support of Executive Order 16-29 and the Public Health Emergency Declaration for Zika virus:**

www.floridahealth.gov/_documents/newsroom/press-releases/2016/02/020416-declaration-public-health-emergency.pdf.