

Counseling Non-Pregnant, Female Clients about Family Planning in the Context of Zika

Every client is unique, so you should be prepared to discuss Zika whenever you find it is appropriate to do so. In many cases it will be most helpful to introduce the topic of Zika after assessing clients' feelings and intentions around future pregnancy. This will allow for information about Zika virus to be provided in a manner that is tailored to individuals' specific needs, followed by counseling that is appropriate given their desires and the possibility of future pregnancy (Figure 1, see Job Aid #1 for more detail). The content of counseling will depend on whether the clinic is located in an area with local transmission of Zika or not. While the basic structure of counseling is similar in both cases, we provide guidance about specific considerations for these two different situations in the sections below.

Counseling about Zika virus when there is so much uncertainty about pathogenesis, risk, and potential spread is challenging. Acknowledging this uncertainty when providing care can promote a transparent and trusting clinical relationship and enable women to make the best decisions for themselves based on the best information available.

This section focuses on the approach to providing family planning care to female clients. Information about counseling men about Zika risk is included on page 12.

1. Assessing reproductive goals

While women's reproductive intentions can be assessed using a variety of approaches, it may be most helpful

to initiate the discussion by asking open-ended questions, such as, "What are your thoughts about pregnancy?" Using an open-ended approach will help identify women who may be ambivalent or do not have timing-based intentions around pregnancy. Follow-up questions can clarify whether a client wishes to become pregnant or avoid pregnancy now or whether her intentions are unclear, as well as whether there are specific factors contributing to ambivalence that can be addressed.

2. Risk assessment

Assessing a client's risk for Zika is complicated by the potential for both mosquito-borne and sexual transmission, and the variable time periods of interest depending on issues such as whether or not an individual had symptoms of Zika. Therefore, a two-step screening process may facilitate efficient and accurate risk assessment.

For the first-step, the client can be provided with a screening form that provides a high-level assessment of possible risk prior to seeing the provider (e.g., at the time of checking in for an appointment or when being placed in an examination room) (Job Aid #2). During the one-on-one clinical encounter, providers can then use the responses to these questions to determine whether a more in-depth assessment is necessary.

The questions asked at both steps will vary by whether the clinic site is located in an area with or without Zika transmission.

For areas WITHOUT local mosquito-borne transmission

Initial screening questions for all female clients prior to the visit (Job Aid #2 for areas WITHOUT local mosquito-borne transmission)

1. Where have you traveled to or lived in the past 8 weeks?



2. Where do you plan to travel to or live in the next year?
3. Where has any person you are having sex with traveled to or lived in the past 6 months?
4. Where does anyone you are having sex with plan to travel to or live in the next year?

In-depth risk assessment to be performed by provider based on answers to initial screening questions (Job Aid #3)

1. Have you traveled to or lived in an area with Zika in the past 8 weeks? (See <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html> for updated areas with local mosquito-borne transmission of Zika virus)
2. Are you having sex (including vaginal, anal, or oral sex or the sharing of sex toys), or have you had sex in the past 8 weeks, with a person who is at risk for spreading Zika? (*Note: People at risk of spreading Zika are defined on page 4.*) (Consider the following probes.)
 - If any male sex partner traveled to or lived in an area with Zika in the 6 months prior to sex
 - If any female sex partner traveled to or lived in an area with Zika in the past 8 weeks prior to sex
 - Whether the client used, or is using, a condom every time with any potentially exposed partner
3. If yes to either recent travel to an area with Zika or sex without a condom with a person at risk of Zika, did you have any of the following symptoms of Zika infection within 2 weeks from any time you might have gotten Zika?
 - Fever
 - Rash
 - Joint pain/Arthralgias
 - Red eyes/Conjunctivitis
4. Do you or any person you have sex with plan to travel to or live in an area with Zika?

For areas WITH local mosquito-borne transmission

Initial screening questions for all female clients prior to the visit (Job Aid #2 for areas WITH local mosquito-borne transmission)

1. Have you heard about the Zika virus and its impact on pregnancies?
2. What steps are you taking to protect yourself from Zika infection or its consequences?
 - Preventing mosquito bites
 - Using condoms
 - Using other forms of birth control

Follow-up screening to be performed by provider (Job Aid #3 for areas WITH local mosquito-borne transmission)

1. Have you had any of these symptoms of Zika infection within the past 8 weeks?
 - Fever
 - Rash
 - Joint pain/Arthralgias
 - Red eyes/Conjunctivitis
2. Has any person you have sex with had any of these symptoms in the past 6 months (for male partners) or 8 weeks (for female partners)?
 - Fever
 - Rash
 - Joint pain
 - Red eyes

3. Clients wishing to prevent pregnancy

The above assessment will identify clients at risk for Zika, including those who: (a) live in an area without local transmission but have been previously exposed to Zika based on their or their partner(s)' travel to an affected area, or who intend to travel, or whose partner(s) intend to travel to an affected area in the near future; or (b) live in an area with local transmission. Women who wish to prevent pregnancy should receive education about the epidemiology and risks associated with Zika virus at a level appropriate for their degree of risk (see Client Handout #1 for all clients, and Client Handout #2 for those with ongoing risk), as well as testing for Zika virus as indicated (see Job Aid #7). While these clients are not currently interested in pregnancy, this education can be framed as information

that can help them understand their risk of Zika, that may be helpful when choosing a contraceptive method, and that will be useful if their pregnancy desires change. This conversation can be initiated by asking clients what they know about Zika in order to facilitate an interactive, individualized educational discussion.

After providing this background, provide client-centered contraceptive counseling to help the client choose a method that is best for her. A person's risk of Zika may influence her contraceptive preferences. Specifically, those who are at greater risk due to geography, travel, or partner risk factors may be more interested in using a highly effective method to prevent an undesired pregnancy. At the same time, clients will continue to have preferences about other method characteristics that influence their choice of a contraceptive method. Helping clients to consider their reproductive options in the context of Zika and other personal and contextual influences should be done in a manner consistent with the CDC and Office of Population Affairs (OPA) recommendations, *Providing Quality Family Planning Services* (2014).

Key recommendations from these guidelines include:

- Engage in client-centered and culturally competent counseling that focuses on clients' individual needs and preferences.
- Use plain language and best practices for risk communication, and utilize the teach-back method and other approaches to ensure understanding.
- Discuss contraceptive effectiveness as one consideration in the choice of a contraceptive method.
- Offer a full-range of methods on a same-day, onsite basis, including long-acting reversible contraceptive methods (IUDs and implant). This includes offering emergency contraception to all clients.
- Educate clients that correct and consistent use of condoms reduces the risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, as well as Zika. Clients should be offered both condoms and other methods of contraception.

The Job Aids #4 and #5 can help you provide contraceptive services in a client-centered manner.

Following selection of a contraceptive method, ensure all women have received information about how to prevent Zika virus infection as appropriate for their level of risk (Client Handout #1 for all women, Job Aid #6 and Client Handout #2 for those with identified risk). While this is particularly important for those choosing a less effective method, who therefore are at increased risk of a pregnancy, this counseling should be provided to all women given that women using contraception may experience an unintended pregnancy and that women's feelings about future pregnancy and their related contraceptive behaviors may change.

All women who are concerned about Zika and who have a partner who has been exposed to Zika should use condoms, in addition to any other method of contraception they choose to use.

- For those living in areas **without** Zika: use condoms for at least 6 months after a male partner's symptom onset or return from an area with active Zika transmission; or 8 weeks after a female partner's symptom onset or return from an area with active Zika transmission.
- For those living in areas **with** Zika: If a partner experienced symptoms, condoms (and other barriers to protect against infection) should be used for at least 6 months after symptom onset for male partners and 8 weeks after symptoms onset for female partners. If the partner did not have symptoms, condoms (and other barriers to protect against infection) should be used for as long as Zika is in the area.

Factors to consider regarding condom use include the effectiveness of other contraceptive methods used by the woman, the partner's use of preventive measures against mosquito bites while in an area with Zika, and the acceptability and accessibility of condoms.

4. Clients who desire pregnancy

Following the risk assessment, providers can educate clients interested in becoming pregnant about the epidemiology and risks associated with Zika infection (see Client Handout #1 and Job Aids #2 and #3).

Additional steps should be taken for clients who are at risk for Zika infection. As described, at-risk clients include those who: (a) live in an area *without local transmission* but have been previously exposed to Zika

based on their or their partner(s)' travel to an affected area, or who intend to travel, or whose partner(s) intend to travel, to an affected area in the near future; or (b) live in an area *with local transmission*. Education for these clients should include specific information about the recommendations around timing of conception in the context of possible or known Zika exposure (Box 1 and Job Aid #3), as well as a determination of whether testing for Zika virus is necessary (Job Aid #7).

You can then explore with the client in a non-judgmental manner whether her risk of Zika virus both now and in the future influences her desire for pregnancy and the timing of attempts to conceive. For example, risk could be mitigated by avoiding conception before and after a planned trip to an area with local transmission or by avoiding non-essential travel to such areas. Other factors to consider include the ability to use strategies to prevent infection with Zika before and during pregnancy.

Current CDC guidelines provide couples planning to conceive with recommendations that, based on existing data, are expected to minimize risk for Zika virus transmission to an uninfected partner (see Box 1). Studies are underway to better understand the persistence of infectious Zika virus in semen and the associated risk for sexual transmission. Given that limited data are available, some couples in whom a partner had possible Zika virus exposure might choose to wait longer or shorter than the recommended period to conceive, depending on individual circumstances (e.g., age, fertility, details of possible exposure) and risk tolerance. For example, even though a negative test result does not confirm the absence of Zika virus, after consultation with their health care provider, symptomatic persons with negative test results who received testing in the appropriate time window and in accordance with the CDC testing guidelines might choose not to wait to conceive (See Job aid #7 for testing time windows).

For clients wishing to attempt conception now or in the near future, offer education regarding how to reduce risk of Zika infection. While this is most important for those with identified risks, all women should receive basic information (Job Aid #6, Client Handout #1 for all clients, Client Handout #2 for those with ongoing risk) as well as other preconception care. In addition,

provide information about Zika symptoms and how to seek care were those to occur.

For those who wish to, at least temporarily, avoid conception, client-centered contraceptive counseling can be provided as described on the previous page.

Box 1: Recommendations for Pregnancy Timing After Zika Exposure

| Suggested timeframe to wait before pregnancy | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Women | Men |
| People living in areas without Zika but with possible exposure via recent travel or sex (either vaginal, anal or oral, or the sharing of sex toys) with a person at risk for spreading Zika | | |
| ▶ Zika symptoms | At least 8 weeks after symptoms start | At least 6 months after symptoms start* |
| ▶ No Zika symptoms | At least 8 weeks after last possible exposure | At least 6 months after last possible exposure |
| People living in areas with Zika | | |
| ▶ Zika symptoms | At least 8 weeks after symptoms start | At least 6 months after symptoms start* |
| ▶ No Zika symptoms | Talk with doctor or healthcare provider | Talk with doctor or healthcare provider |

*These guidelines may change based on new information. Up to date information can be found at www.cdc.gov/zika.

5. Clients without a clear intention about future pregnancy (i.e., not actively trying to conceive but not attempting to prevent pregnancy either).

Counseling of these clients should be conducted in a similar manner to those who are actively attempting conception, with a risk assessment and education about Zika appropriate to their level of risk. After providing this information, you can assess whether clients' feelings about pregnancy have changed, including whether they now wish to actively attempt to prevent pregnancy or, alternatively, wish to plan conception. For those whose feelings about pregnancy have changed you can provide appropriate care — either preconception counseling or client-centered contraceptive care — as described above.

If a client remains without clear intention and does not desire to use contraception, you can acknowledge

the potential risk for pregnancy in a non-judgmental manner. You should discuss risk reduction strategies, including avoiding pregnancy during periods of higher risk, and how to recognize Zika symptoms with these clients in a manner similar to those with a clear desire to become pregnant, with the goal being to optimize the outcome of a pregnancy.

6. Clients who come for pregnancy testing and counseling

Counseling for clients who come for pregnancy testing can begin with a risk assessment (Job Aids #2 and #3) and a general overview of the epidemiology and risks associated with Zika infection (see Client Handout #1).

Offer education about Zika to clients who have a negative pregnancy test. Provide family planning services, as described above, in accordance with CDC-OPA recommendations *Providing Quality Family Planning Services* (2014) and the specific considerations related to Zika risk.

Additional steps should be taken for clients who are at risk for Zika infection with a positive pregnancy test. These clients include those who: (a) live in an area *without local transmission* but have been previously exposed to Zika based on their or their partner(s)' travel to an affected area, or who intend to travel to an affected area in the near future; or (b) live in an area *with local transmission*. These women can be informed that microcephaly can sometimes be diagnosed during an ultrasound, but it might not be detectable until late in the second or early in the third trimester of pregnancy. Clients should be provided with neutral, factual information and nondirective counseling and referral on request regarding options including: prenatal care and delivery; infant care, foster care, or adoption; and pregnancy termination. For clients who are planning to continue their pregnancy or are unsure and who are at risk for Zika, discuss how to reduce risk of Zika transmission through mosquito bites and sexual transmission (Job Aid #6, Client Handout #2) and provide prenatal care, either directly or through referral, informed by CDC recommendations for care

of pregnant women, including providing testing for Zika. If a woman with risk factors for Zika has had symptoms within the past 2 weeks, perform urine and serum testing for Zika per CDC guidelines at the time of pregnancy diagnosis (see http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/testing_algorithm.pdf).

7. Clients at risk of transmitting Zika to their partners

In addition to considering their own risk of a Zika-exposed pregnancy, women who are at risk for Zika should be counseled about strategies to limit their potential to sexually transmit the virus to others. Those who experienced symptoms after an exposure should be counseled that correct and consistent use of condoms for at least 8 weeks after the onset of symptoms will decrease the risk of sexual transmission. Those who were potentially exposed to Zika but did not experience symptoms and who want to reduce the risk of sexual transmission should use condoms for at least 8 weeks after the exposure. Women living in an area with active Zika virus transmission should use condoms or abstain from sex and sharing of sex toys while active transmission persists.

Counseling Male Clients with Non-Pregnant Partners about Family Planning in the Context of Zika

Male clients need to be aware of the risk of Zika virus transmission and educated about how to reduce their risk of getting infected, and if infected, how to decrease risk to their sexual partners. Counseling of these clients should include the following information (Job Aid #8):

1. Risk Assessment

Counseling male clients should include a risk assessment to determine whether the client may have been exposed or is at risk for exposure to the Zika virus, including testing as indicated (Job Aid #7 and #8).

For areas WITHOUT local mosquito-borne transmission

Initial screening questions for all male clients prior to the visit (Job Aid #2)

1. Where have you traveled to or lived in the past 6 months?
2. Where do you plan to travel to or live in the next year?
3. Where have your sexual partner(s) traveled to or lived in the past 6 months?"
4. Where does anyone you are having sex with plan to travel to or live in the next year?

In-depth risk assessment to be performed by provider (Job Aid #8)

1. Have you traveled to or lived in an area with Zika in the past 6 months?
2. Are you having sex (including vaginal, anal, or oral sex, or sharing of sex toys), or have you had sex in the past 6 months, with a person who is at risk for spreading Zika? (*Note: People at risk of spreading Zika are defined on page 4*).
3. If yes to either recent travel to an area with Zika or sex without a condom with a partner at risk for Zika, did you have any of the following

symptoms of Zika infection within 2 weeks of the time you might have been exposed to Zika?

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint pain/Arthralgias
- Red eyes/Conjunctivitis

4. Do you or anyone you have sex with have plans to travel to or live in an area with Zika?

For areas WITH local mosquito-borne transmission

Initial screening questions for all male clients (Job Aid #2)

1. Have you heard about the Zika virus and its impact on pregnancies?
2. What steps are you taking to prevent yourself from Zika infection and its consequences?
 - Preventing mosquito bites
 - Using condoms
 - Using other forms of birth control

Follow-up screening to be performed by provider (Job Aid #8)

1. Have you had any of the following symptoms of Zika infection within the past 6 months?
 - Fever
 - Rash
 - Joint pain/Arthralgias
 - Red eyes/Conjunctivitis

2. Basic information about Zika virus

Providing basic information about Zika can be initiated by asking clients what they know about Zika, and then providing tailored information. This facilitates an interactive discussion. (Client Handouts #1 and #3).

3. Information about the implications of risk assessment

Counseling male clients should also include providing information about prevention of Zika and its consequences in the context of their risk. (See *Client Handout #3 and Job Aids #6 and #7*).

- Male clients who experienced symptoms after an exposure should be informed in plain language that they could potentially infect their partners through sexual transmission for at least 6 months after the onset of symptoms. While testing should be offered to these clients per CDC guidance, the results should not be used to establish the absence of risk. Persons with negative tests should still follow recommended prevention measures.
- Men without symptoms should be informed that they may still be at risk of infecting their partner(s).
 - Men who live in areas **without** local transmission should be advised that sexual transmission may be possible up to at least 6 months after travel to an area with local transmission.
 - Men who live in areas **with** local transmission should be informed that it may be possible to infect their partners even without the development of symptoms.
- Male clients whose partner(s) are potentially exposed to Zika can use condoms (male or female) to reduce their risk of getting infected.

Information for male clients about preventing Zika virus infection and its consequences via transmission to sexual partners (Client Handout #3)

| For those living in areas WITH Zika transmission | For those living in areas WITHOUT Zika transmission, but potentially exposed |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pregnancy is not desired, correct and consistent use of contraception can reduce the risk of an unintended pregnancy. • Correct and consistent condom use can reduce the risk of both Zika and pregnancy. Not having sex can eliminate the risk of Zika and unintended pregnancy. • Use mosquito bite prevention strategies (Job Aid #6). • If had symptoms of Zika: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wait to attempt conception for at least 6 months after onset of symptoms. ◦ Use condoms with all partners or do not have sex for at least 6 months after symptom onset, if concerned about sexual transmission of Zika. • If did not have symptoms of Zika: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If concerned about Zika transmission, use condoms with partner(s) or do not have sex while Zika is in the area, if conception is not desired. ◦ If interested in conceiving a pregnancy, consider timing of conception given the potential risk of Zika virus infection during pregnancy. When weighing the benefits and risks, couples should consider personal factors (such as age and fertility), as well as the ability of both partners to use mosquito bite prevention strategies prior to and during pregnancy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If potentially exposed to Zika: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wait to attempt conception for at least 6 months after last possible exposure or onset of symptoms. ◦ If concerned about sexual transmission to partner(s), use condoms for at least 6 months after onset of symptoms, regardless of use of other contraceptives. • If interested in conceiving a pregnancy in the near future, consider avoiding non-essential travel to an area with Zika. • If travel to area with Zika, use strategies to prevent Zika virus infection as indicated (Job Aid #6) and consider recommendations for timing of conception after Zika exposure. |