

## **UPDATE: Free Zika Testing Expanded to Include Pregnant Women Travelers Without Symptoms**

BREWSTER, NY—Free advanced testing for Zika virus infection has been expanded by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). Now pregnant women without symptoms, who travelled to the areas affected by the Zika virus, can take advantage of this free testing. Previously only pregnant women with symptoms and a travel history to the areas were eligible.

“This expanded testing makes good clinical sense,” said Putnam County’s Interim Health Commissioner, Michael Nesheiwat, MD. “Because symptoms of Zika are usually mild they may go unnoticed. For pregnant women and their developing babies the results could be severe, given the link to microcephaly.”

Testing continues for all others with symptoms who have travelled to the affected areas. The procedure to be tested remains the same: residents should visit their personal healthcare provider who will work with the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) to facilitate the proper testing procedure through the NYSDOH laboratory at Wadsworth Center. Wadsworth is one of only three state laboratories in the country equipped to perform the screening and confirmatory tests of Zika antibodies and other related viruses. The NYSDOH Zika information line is 1-888-364-4723.

This public health emergency continues to evolve. The CDC is now recommending that pregnant women abstain from sex or utilize protection for the duration of their pregnancies, if their male partner has traveled to or lives in an area with active Zika transmission.

Further information on Zika virus is available at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases>

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at [www.putnamcountyny.com/health](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health) or visit the social media sites on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](http://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth), [www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam](http://www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam), [www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY](http://www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY) and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.