



FIGO Statement on the Zika Virus

The recent Zika virus outbreak - and its association with the birth defect known as microcephaly - highlights the need for universal access to the full spectrum of reproductive health services for all women.

Recognising that contraception is essential health care, the needs of reproductive age and pregnant women go further. The World Health Organization has declared the Zika virus outbreak a global public health emergency. The health concerns related to Zika virus exposure have prompted officials in affected regions to recommend women delay pregnancy until the outbreak can be effectively controlled.

Obstetrician-gynecologists, who are dedicated to the care of women, have long recognised the value of birth control to a woman's health and well-being and that access to the full range of women's reproductive health services is essential for optimal pregnancy outcomes. Ob/gyns recognise that all pregnant women of reproductive age living in Zika endemic regions need to be able to protect themselves from mosquito-borne disease through public health measures and personal protection such as bed nets and mosquito repellent. Women who have travelled to these areas need evaluation as recommended by the CDC or the approved national guidelines. Men and women need to be aware of the potential of Zika transmission via sexual intercourse. Pregnant women require access to prenatal care, including counselling and diagnostic ultrasound.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) joins with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the Federation of Latin American Societies of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (FLASOG) and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) in a call for immediate action on the part of governments, donors and health care providers to: 1. Ensure that all women at risk for pregnancy have access to affordable effective contraception, 2. Ensure that all pregnant women have access to appropriate prenatal care and counselling, and 3. Reduce the risk of mosquito-borne disease.

During this difficult crisis our societies respect the reproductive rights of women and the decisions they make after appropriate counselling. The Zika virus outbreak provides confirmation that birth control is preventive care. Women must have urgent access to the full spectrum of reproductive health services to avoid the potentially tragic consequences of Zika exposure.

FIGO also draws attention to the urgent need for better understanding of this virus and its risk to pregnant women, and therefore calls for increased investment in research and the establishment of patient registries.

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Sources/resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>