

Health, government leaders collaborate on Zika action plans

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Health experts and government officials from around the country gathered Friday for a summit to coordinate their response to Zika virus as mosquito season approaches.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s [Zika Action Plan Summit](#) included talks on a wide range of issues including diagnostics, protection for pregnant women, services for children with birth defects, mosquito control and communication.

“Partnerships between pediatricians and public health colleagues are critical to aid families and their children in the prevention, identification of illness and referral to appropriate community resources,” said Fan Tait, M.D., FAAP, AAP associate executive director and director of the Department of Child Health and Wellness who represented the Academy at the summit. “This meeting increases our nation’s preparedness to respond to a virus that is affecting pregnant women and newborns.”

At least 300 people attended the event in person and more than 2,000 watched online. The summit came just one day after the World Health Organization released a [situation report on Zika](#) in which it used its strongest language yet to link Zika virus to [microcephaly](#) and other conditions.

“Based on observational, cohort and case-control studies there is strong scientific consensus that Zika virus is a

cause of GBS ([Guillain-Barré syndrome](#)), microcephaly and other neurological disorders,” it said.

CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. was more cautious Friday, saying he “anticipate(s) that that causal connection (with GBS) will be confirmed in the near future.”

“In terms of the formal criteria for causality (of microcephaly) that is something we’re looking at closely and we will have more information about in the coming days,” he said.

During a press conference, federal officials repeatedly urged Congress to approve a \$1.9 billion funding request to combat Zika.

“Without additional resources we will not be able to get resources to the state and local entities they need for a robust response,” Dr. Frieden said. “We won’t be able to do innovations we need to try to get ahead of not



just this mosquito-borne threat but ... other threats as well. And we need resources in order to provide Americans with the protection they deserve.”

Zika currently is being transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in more than three dozen countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, officials say they anticipate mosquitoes in the continental U.S. eventually will start to spread the virus. The CDC recently **updated its maps** showing where *Aedes* mosquitoes have been known to circulate.

Health officials **recommend that pregnant women avoid travel** to areas where Zika virus is spreading as no vaccines are available. All travelers to areas where Zika is being transmitted should take **steps to avoid mosquito bites**.

For the 20% of those infected who display symptoms, the illness is mild and may include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. The virus is a nationally notifiable disease and should be reported to local, state or territorial health departments to facilitate testing. The CDC also is asking health care providers to contribute data to its new **Zika pregnancy registry** that will follow children exposed to Zika for up to age 1 year.

Resources

- [CDC Zika website](#)
- [Information for clinicians from the CDC](#)
- [Information for parents](#)
- [AAP blog “Zika Virus – Pediatricians Be Aware”](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization Zika website](#)

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