

# Hearing Health Matters!



Ontario Association of Professional Audiology Clinics  
Your Hearing Deserves An Audiologist

## What you should know about Hearing Loss and the Zika Virus

Zika virus (ZIKV) has become increasingly present in the news since 2015 when it rapidly spread across the Americas. Symptoms of the virus can range from a fever and rash to more severe symptoms including Guillain-Barré syndrome, hearing loss, and meningoencephalitis.<sup>1</sup>

In February 2016, the Zika virus was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization. Currently, there is no specific anti-viral treatment or vaccine available.<sup>2</sup> Public health efforts have focused instead on prevention, especially in pregnant women where the infection can be transmitted to the fetus.

Exposure to the Zika virus prenatally has been linked to hearing and vision deficits and microcephaly.<sup>3</sup> The type of hearing loss typically diagnosed in individuals with congenital infection of the virus is sensorineural, where damage is present in the inner ear and is permanent. All children who are exposed to the virus prenatally and congenitally are urged to have hearing monitored regularly as the onset of hearing loss can be delayed or the hearing loss can progress.<sup>4</sup>

Zika virus is becoming known to have an abundance of potential side effects to those infected, especially prenatally and at birth, and while more research is required on the subject, it is clear that the potential impact of the virus on hearing is not one to be overlooked. Monitoring hearing in individuals who have been infected with the virus, especially infants born from women infected while pregnant, is crucial for early identification and treatment of hearing loss.

**These reports support the practice that "(a)ll infants born to women with evidence of Zika virus infection during pregnancy should have their hearing tested, including infants who appear normal at birth."<sup>5</sup>**



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### References

1. <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/94/12/16-175950/en/>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5030833/pdf/sjph-2016-0031.pdf>
3. <http://www.audiology.org/news/zika-virus-disease-outbreak-and-infant-hearing-loss>
4. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6534e3.htm>
5. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/zika-virus-outbreak/zika-damages-babies-hearing-study-finds-n640166>

### Other Resources:

- <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1808869416301276>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/27079865/?i=6&from=/27444419/related>

With so many places to refer your patients, it becomes difficult to choose what is best for your patient.

"As independent practices, we are not limited. When your patient has a permanent and irreversible hearing loss, we can prescribe from 10 different hearing aid manufacturers."

## Greater emphasis is being placed on early identification of hearing loss



According to the report released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "...6 percent to 7 percent of babies with clear Zika brain damage also had some amount of hearing loss."<sup>5</sup>

The Ontario Association of Professional Audiology Clinics (OAPAC) represents independent audiology practices in Ontario.

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**Sudden hearing loss? Call us immediately!**

**1-844-41-2-HEAR (4327)**