

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Zika Virus Disease Outbreak and Infant Hearing Loss**

(Reston, VA–March 30, 2016)—On February 1, the World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern about the recent outbreak of the Zika Virus Disease. Within one week of the WHO’s declaration, the [Center for Disease Control](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2016/1st-emergency-committee-zika/en/) issued its highest response (Level 1) activation, due to the growing number of Zika cases recently reported. The reported cases consist of individuals who contracted the virus disease through travel as well as those who were in contact with a traveler who contracted the virus.

Zika virus disease is transmitted through infected Aedes mosquitos or through exposure to individuals who have contracted Zika Virus. To date, the CDC reports 283 cases of locally acquired infections within the United States, of which 35 were pregnant women. Though, the data are scarce and causality findings are equivocal, there has been a link to a variety of disabilities (i.e., absent or poor function of hearing, vision, impaired growth and microcephaly) in babies of mothers who have had [Zika virus while pregnant](https://www.audiology.org/news/zika-virus-disease-outbreak-and-infant-hearing-loss).

In light of the recent health advisories about the Zika Virus Disease outbreak, and the concerning potential risks for the infants born from mothers who were infected with the virus during pregnancy, the American Academy of Audiology believes it is essential that families and professionals are aware that hearing loss due to the Zika Virus Disease could occur at birth or acquired later. Much like [Cytomeglovirus, and other pathologies](https://www.audiology.org/news/cytomegalovirus-cmv-newborns-and-hearing-loss), it is crucially important to identify hearing loss through [infant hearing screening](https://www.audiology.org/publications-resources/document-library/infant-identification) or [preschool and school‐aged screening programs](https://www.audiology.org/publications-resources/document-library/identification-hearing-loss-middle-ear-dysfunction-preschool) for all infants and children who may be at high risk for hearing loss as a consequence of Zika Virus Disease.

If the hearing screening findings suggest a possible hearing loss, the child should be referred to a pediatric audiologist for diagnostic assessment. In addition, it is important for parents, care givers and other professionals to be familiar with age expected developmental auditory and motor milestones. An audiologist is trained in developmental milestones in childhood as well as screening and diagnostic assessment of hearing loss and vestibular disorders.

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*The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by, and for audiologists. With an active membership of almost 12,000 audiologists, the Academy promotes quality hearing and balance care by advancing the profession of audiology through leadership, advocacy, education, public awareness, and support of research. For more information about the American Academy of Audiology, visit* [*www.audiology.org*.](http://www.audiology.org/)