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US researchers develop saliva-based test for Zika virus

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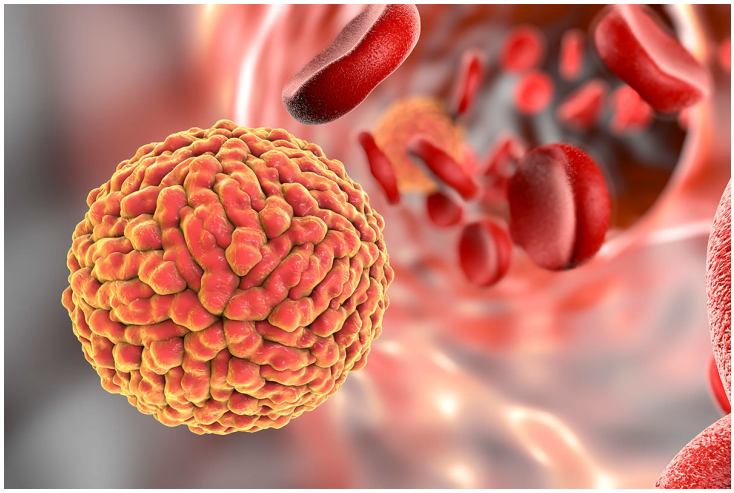

Researchers at New York University College of Dentistry (NYU Dentistry) and Rheonix in the US are developing a new test that uses saliva to detect nucleic acids and antibodies of the Zika Virus.

Based on an existing test model created by the firms for fast detection of HIV, the Zika test is said to identify the viral diagnostic markers much quicker than existing tests.

A blood sample processed with real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is commonly used to test for the Zika virus, followed by a separate step for detecting antibodies.

As the virus in the blood sample disappears in seven to 14 days but stays longer in saliva, researchers believe that the new test could be a better, non-invasive and cost-effective alternative to test for both the virus and antibodies.

The researchers also adopted isothermal amplification that is said to detect virus' nucleic acids in just 20 minutes and antibodies within an hour by using Zika-specific antigens.