

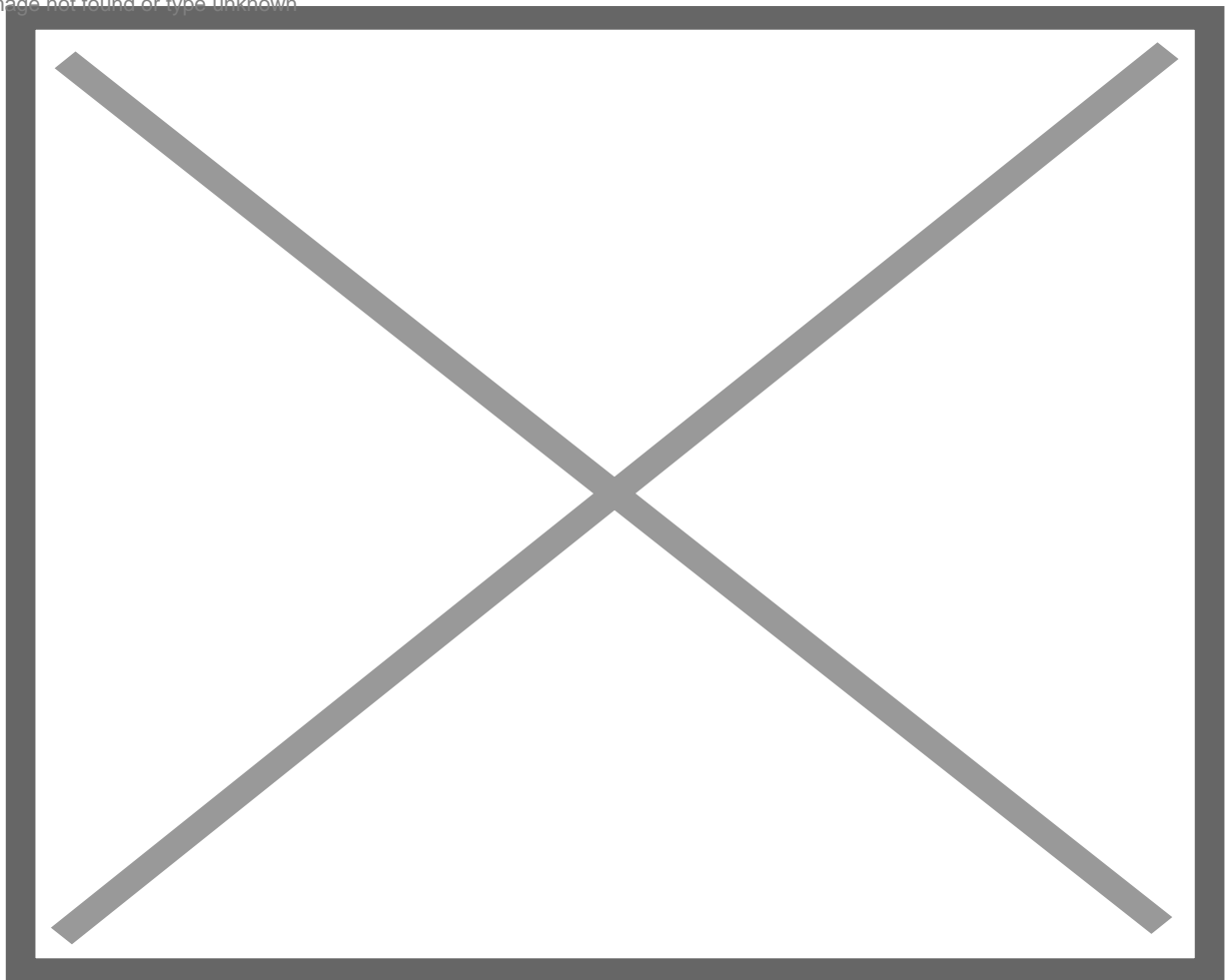
DOH Reports Uptick in Dengue, Urges Precautionary Measures

With 10 confirmed dengue cases this month, health officials emphasize preventative measures

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The V.I. Department of Health has reported a small increase in dengue cases this month, prompting Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion to urge the community to remain vigilant.

According to the latest data from the DOH's Epidemiology Division, there are currently 10 reported dengue cases across the territory, with eight cases on St. Thomas, one on St. John, and one on St. Croix. It is believed that there are more cases that have not been reported.

Ms. Encarnacion emphasized the ideal conditions for mosquito breeding, including warmer temperatures and heavy downpours, which have contributed to the recent uptick. "We're

experiencing warmer and warmer temperatures as well as heavy downpours which are ideal conditions for mosquito breeding; I am encouraging everyone to take the precautions necessary to prevent widespread transmission,” she said. “While the increase is small, we know how easily dengue can spread and we know how dangerous it can be.”

Dengue, a mosquito-borne virus spread via the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, can cause mild to severe and life-threatening symptoms. The most common symptoms include fever, aches and pains (especially behind the eyes), muscle, joint, or bone pain, nausea, vomiting, and rash. Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar, DOH chief medical officer, urged residents experiencing symptoms to seek medical attention and get tested. “If you are experiencing symptoms, it is very important to go to your doctor and get tested to confirm if you truly have dengue or another illness. This is the only way we will get a correct understanding of rates of dengue in the community,” she said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a Health Advisory on Tuesday, notifying healthcare providers, public health authorities, and the public of an increased risk of dengue virus infections in the United States for 2024. The global incidence of dengue has been the highest on record this year, with neighboring Puerto Rico reporting 1,498 cases between January and June and declaring a State of Emergency in April.

The CDC has provided several recommendations for preventing mosquito bites:

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents with DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting long sleeves and pants and apply mosquito repellent to exposed skin.
- Follow instructions carefully when applying repellent to children. Avoid using repellent on babies younger than 2 months old. Instead, dress them in clothing that covers arms and legs and cover strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.
- Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol on children younger than 3 years old. Avoid applying repellent to a child’s hands, eyes, mouth, cuts, or irritated skin.

To protect the home, the CDC recommends:

- Use screens on windows and doors and repair any holes to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out any items that hold water such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpot saucers, or trash containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding.
- Tightly cover water storage containers like buckets, cisterns, and rain barrels to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs inside.
- Use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito for containers without lids.
- Fill tree holes to prevent water accumulation.
- Repair cracks or gaps in cisterns and septic tanks and cover open vent or plumbing pipes with wire mesh or mosquito netting.

According to the World Health Organization, dengue is the most common mosquito-borne virus worldwide, infecting more than 400 million people annually. The virus is endemic in more than 100 countries, predominantly in tropical and subtropical climates, including urban and semi-urban areas in Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

For more information about dengue, visit the [CDC's dengue information page](#).

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