

The Virgin Islands Consortium

952 Suspected Cases Of Chikungunya In VI As Numbers Grow On St. Croix, Improve On St. Thomas

VIC News / **Published On October 23, 2014 09:07 AM /**

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Although the amount of suspected chikungunya cases in the Virgin Islands grew to 952 from last week's 902, the disease has continued to lose steam in the territory, especially in St. Thomas where the confirmed number of cases essentially remained the same: 63 -- last week's number was 62, according to the [latest report](#) from the Dept. of Health.

Confirmed cases on St. Croix remained the same at 5, however suspected cases grew from 51 to 91. St. John held steady at 5 confirmed cases, and added just one more case to the suspected list, moving from 34 to 35. On St. Thomas, the confirmed number increased by just 1, to 63 cases, while the suspected number rose from 807 to 828.

St. Thomas' latest numbers represent a solid change in trajectory for the Island, which has been hit the hardest by chikungunya, and have seen cases double in a week's time.

The latest report shows that the Dept. of Health's awareness efforts have been moderately working, and it's also a sign that chikungunya may finally be waning in the territory, although it remains to be seen if the disease will see a resurgence in St. Croix, where suspected cases saw a reasonable jump over last week.

The new numbers should not stop residents and visitors alike from taking precautions, however, as this could cause a spike in the number of cases seen in the territory, something health officials have consistently warned against. The Department of Health's territorial epidemiologist, Dr. Esther Ellis, recently said the territory was experiencing a chikungunya epidemic and gave residents, as well as visitors, pertinent advice to protect themselves from contracting the disease.

They include:

- Use insect repellents — Repellents containing DEET or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Apply repellent only to exposed skin or clothing, follow product instructions carefully. Do not use repellents on babies less than two months of age.
- Use air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If you are not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes inside your home or hotel, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- Wear clothing that protects you from mosquito bites (long-sleeved shirts and long pants).
- Protect infants: cover cribs, strollers and baby carriers with cotton mosquito netting at all times, day and night, both inside and outside of your home. Dress babies in loose cotton clothing that covers arms and leg.
- Treat clothing with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated clothing.

Now that chikungunya seems to be on the decline in the territory, the DOH has been keeping an eye on, and warning residents of Enterovirus D68 (EVD68), a fast-spreading, extremely contagious virus that has ravaged many states on the mainland and in Canada. Details [here](#). DOH has also been preparing for possible [Ebola cases in the territory](#).

Image Credit: NPR.org