

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two New Cases Of Zika Confirmed In Territory; Total Cases Now 16

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Health on Tuesday confirmed two new cases of the Zika virus in the Virgin Islands -- one in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas. The total confirmed Zika cases is now 16; 14 of which are in St. Croix and two in St. Thomas.

"Today's report shows that we must continue to protect ourselves from mosquito-borne illnesses," Commissioner Nominee Dr. Michelle Davis stated in response to the updated report. "With Carnival, Jump Up, Ironman-Triathlon, and so many other outdoor events this week, it is important to wear repellent and protective clothing."

D.O.H. says the advice is especially true for pregnant women, as Zika can be passed to unborn babies and can cause serious birth defects.

“The Department of Health offers free testing and services for pregnant women to prevent Zika infection and prevent mosquitoes from living in their homes,” explained Deputy D.O.H. Commissioner Kimberly Jones.

Free Zika testing locations can be found [here](#) or at the bottom of this article. D.O.H. says it will inspect the homes of pregnant women for mosquitoes and mosquito larvae, and provide treatment as needed in the homes of those pregnant women who receive testing.

Pregnant women are also eligible to receive a free [Zika prevention kit](#) from 14 healthcare clinics across the Virgin Islands. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently delivered 750 kits to St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas. Each kit includes educational materials in English and Spanish, EPA-registered insect repellent, permethrin spray repellent for treating clothing, condoms to avoid sexual transmission of Zika, treatment tabs for preventing mosquitoes from breeding in standing water, and a bed net, according to the release.

Zika is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week after being bitten by an infected mosquito. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

The following steps can be taken to prevent Zika: wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside, use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol.

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