

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. Has 234 Pregnant Women With Zika; 3 Babies Born With Birth Defects, C.D.C. Says

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ST. CROIX -- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday that women infected with the Zika virus during their pregnancy has risen to 234.

C.D.C. officials did not reveal how many of those affected had given birth, citing confidentiality reasons, but it did say that 3 babies had been born with birth defects caused by Zika, and another 3 babies had died before birth with evidence of birth defects.

C.D.C. said some of the defects were related to microcephaly, a condition linked to Zika that causes brain damage and abnormally small heads. Others, like eye problems, were

Zika-related, but not caused by microcephaly. But without knowing the total number of births, officials cannot know if the babies with birth defects represent a tiny fraction of the total, or a large part.

The C.D.C. also reported on Thursday that the total number of pregnant women who had been infected with Zika in U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, was 189. But the agency did not report birth outcomes for that group. However, the Virgin Islands Department of Health reported in May that so far [two pregnant women](#) have been infected with the virus.

Speaking with The New York Times, Dr. Denise J. Jamieson, one of the leaders of the pregnancy and birth defects team, which is part of the C.D.C.'s Zika response effort, said the release of the numbers was the first in what will be weekly updates on birth outcomes in Zika pregnancies. As the number of births rises, she said, the agency will be able to release more detailed information.

"We're sort of in a hard place," Dr. Jamieson said. "We can't provide a lot of information about where these women are in their pregnancy. We don't want to inadvertently disclose information about difficult decisions these women are making about their pregnancies."

"Microcephalic babies are beginning to be born," Dr. Jamieson added. "The disease seems to be very similar no matter where it is."

Feature Image: Mothers with children who have microcephaly await medical care at the Hospital Oswaldo Cruz, in Recife, Brazil, in January. Credit Ueslei Marcelino/Reuters