

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Three Women Confirmed To Be Pregnant And Infected With Zika As Number Of Cases In VI Jump To 65

Health / **Published On July 26, 2016 10:19 PM /**

Staff **July 26, 2016**



The Department of Health said on Tuesday that 9 additional Zika cases have been confirmed in the territory, bringing the islands' total count to 65 -- 19 cases in St. Croix, 45 cases in St. Thomas and 1 in St. John. According to D.O.H., out of 830 tests completed for pregnant women, 10 have laboratory evidence of Zika; seven 7 are presumptive positive -- meaning they are more than likely infected but D.O.H. need to conduct additional tests to confirm -- and 3 are confirmed.

In response to the rise in Zika cases in the territory and the discovery that Zika can be sexually transmitted by both men and women, D.O.H. is sponsoring [two Zika public forums](#), one in each district, the department made known via press release Friday.

The department is inviting the entire community and especially pregnant women and their partners, since pregnant women are at risk of having babies with Zika-related birth defects. The virus has been linked to unusually small heads and brain damage in newborns — called microcephaly — in children born to infected mothers, as well as blindness, deafness, seizures and other congenital defects. In adults, the virus is linked to a form of temporary paralysis, called Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Participants will learn how Zika is spread, what the symptoms are, the ways they can protect their families and more. The events are part of a larger D.O.H. outreach campaign to both clinicians and the general public to help reduce the spread of Zika, according to the release.

The events will take place on Tuesday in St. Croix at U.V.I.'s Great Hall and Wednesday in St. Thomas at the Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Center Auditorium, located at the Schneider Regional Medical Center. Both events will start at 5:30 p.m. and run until 7:30 p.m.

To date D.O.H., in partnership with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has provided 232 presentations throughout the territory, 18 in St. John, 80 in St. Thomas, 133 in St. Croix, according to the release. Currently there are 10 C.D.C. staff embedded in D.O.H.'s Emergency Operations Center assisting with the Zika response.

Zika is spread 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 or may be infected and have no symptoms. Zika can also be spread sexually.

The World Health Organization and the C.D.C. have urged pregnant women against travel to more than 45 countries in which the Zika virus is spreading, mostly in the Caribbean and Latin America. All pregnant women who have been to these regions should be tested for the infection, health officials have said, and should refrain from unprotected sex with partners who have visited these regions.

The Zika virus has been linked to unusually small heads and brain damage in newborns — called microcephaly — in children born to infected mothers, as well as blindness, deafness, seizures and other congenital defects. In adults, the virus is linked to a form of temporary paralysis, called Guillain-Barré syndrome.