

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Territory Sees 47 New Zika Cases In Latest Report; Total Now 346

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The territory saw 47 new cases of the Zika virus this week according to the Department of Health's latest report, issued this afternoon. This week's spike is the second largest yet, with [last week seeing the greatest one-week increase](#) of 56 new cases.

Breakdown per island sees St. Thomas leading with 284 confirmed cases, followed by St. Croix with 51 confirmed cases, and St. John with 11 confirmed cases, [according to the report](#), leading to a total of 346. Women are the bulk of the infected with 70 percent of the total, compared to 28 percent of men.

Twenty-two pregnant women have tested positive for the disease, while 12 are presumed to be positive as well, according to D.O.H.

Two weeks ago, D.O.H. Commissioner Michelle Davis [said the territory was at the high point of the disease](#), and once that stage is passed, the number of cases should start to decrease.

“We are in the exponential phase of the epidemiological curve of the outbreak, which means every week we will have more positive results coming back. At some point the results will peak and then we will be on the other side of the outbreak and will then see a reduction in cases,” Ms. Davis said.

“To date, three women who tested positive for Zika during pregnancy have delivered healthy infants. The Department of Health is monitoring these infants for up to 12 months to ensure they meet all developmental milestones. Based on current research, greater than 90 percent of all pregnant women who test positive for Zika will deliver an infant free from the development of microcephaly. Additionally, over 1,500 individuals have been tested for Zika in the territory and the majority of the lab results have been negative,” she added.

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 — 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.