

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Over 1,000 Zika Cases Have Been Reported In VI; Confirmed Cases Rise To 365; 33 Pregnant Women Test Positive

Health / **Published On September 21, 2016 09:52 AM /**

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ST. THOMAS -- Since the Virgin Islands Department of Health began reporting the spread of the Zika virus in the territory, there have been 1,060 cases reported so far, of which 365 cases, according to D.O.H.'s [latest report](#), have tested positive.

Zika, which 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 -- has infected 33 pregnant U.S. Virgin Islands women to date, with another 7 cases said to be probable, meaning those women are

most likely infected, but D.O.H. is waiting on more lab results for absolute certainty.

When the disease first started affecting the territory, St. Croix saw the bulk of the cases, but the trend [took a turn early July](#), when St. Thomas numbers suddenly saw drastic increases. Now, this island accounts for a majority of the confirmed cases with 300, followed by St. Croix with 52, and St. John with 13, bringing the total count to 365 territory-wide.

Three weeks ago, D.O.H. Commissioner Michelle Davis [said the territory was at the high point of the disease](#), and once that stage had 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.