

France warns of epidemic after chikungunya deaths in Antilles, Guiana

July 10 2014

France's health minister warned Thursday of a serious epidemic in the Antilles and French Guiana after 33 deaths were reported in connection with the chikungunya virus.

"This is a major epidemic, with about 5,000 new cases every month," Marisol Touraine told BFMTV. "The disease has indirectly caused 33 deaths in vulnerable elderly people, affected nearly 100,000 people and resulted in 1,000 hospitalisations in the French Americas."

Touraine said she was going to the region next week to deal with what she called "a major public health issue".

The Antilles, also known as the French West Indies, are a group of Caribbean islands under French sovereignty, while French Guiana is a territory on the north Atlantic coast of South America, bordered by Brazil and Suriname.

The mosquito-born [chikungunya virus](#) has been spreading through the Caribbean and Central America.

The virus—rarely fatal, but nevertheless serious—sparks high fevers and severe joint aches, as well as headaches, nausea and extreme fatigue.

It does not kill directly but in combination with other illnesses can lead to death.

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