

Three Canadians infected abroad by Zika virus: official

January 28 2016

Three Canadians have been infected with the Zika virus while traveling abroad, Canadian health authorities said Thursday, raising the possibility of new blood donor restrictions to prevent the disease's spread.

"There are three cases in Canada," a spokesman for the [health ministry](#) told AFP.

Two cases involved people who live in westernmost British Columbia province and were infected in El Salvador and Colombia respectively. Another involved an Alberta resident. Officials did not specify where the person had traveled.

None of the three was pregnant and all have recovered.

"We have no reason to believe that local transmission is a concern for Canadians," said Health Minister Jane Philpott, while urging travelers to take precautions.

Meanwhile, she said Canadian Blood Services, which is responsible for collecting [blood donations](#) in the country, is looking into whether to restrict persons who recently traveled to certain countries from giving blood.

"Canadian Blood Services is re-evaluating whether there need to be changes to their policy in terms of a possible travel deferral period for this," the minister said.

"As you know, the organizations already have intake information about the travel patterns of those who have donated blood. But we expect further modifications to their [donor program](#) and will announce those as soon as we can."

The mosquito-borne virus has been linked to serious birth defects, including microcephaly, a condition in which a newborn's brain and skull are abnormally small. Developmental problems often result.

Earlier in the day, the World Health Organization (WHO) set an emergency meeting for February 1 on the Zika virus, which is spreading "explosively" in the Americas, with three to four million cases expected this year.

No cases of direct infection have yet been registered inside the United States or Canada.

WHO has previously said that it expects Zika to spread to every country in the Americas except Canada and Chile.

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