

19 Zika virus cases in Puerto Rico: official

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The mosquito-borne Zika virus has now been found in 19 people in Puerto Rico, although none were pregnant women, the group most at risk, the island's health secretary said.

The virus has been linked to a surge in births of babies with abnormally small heads, and pregnant women have been advised not to travel to Latin American and Caribbean countries because of the virus.

"An infected person must have come, who infected a population of mosquitos, which in turn infected a local population, permitting the spread of the disease," Puerto Rico's Health Secretary Ana Rius said.

She reported that 18 new cases of the Zika virus have been detected in the US possession, raising the total to 19 since the Caribbean island's first case was confirmed last month.

Puerto Rico's cases of Zika, a virus carried by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which also transmits dengue and chikungunya, were concentrated in the island's southeast, Rius said.

In Brazil, Zika virus infections in pregnant women have been linked to 3,893 births of babies with abnormally small heads, a condition known as microcephaly.

"We appeal especially to pregnant women, that if they have symptoms of fever, to go immediately to their doctor," Rius said.

The World Health Organization has warned that the virus could spread rapidly throughout the Western Hemisphere, except in Chile and Canada, which have no *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos.

US health authorities have warned [pregnant women](#) not to travel to 22 places in Latin America and the Caribbean to avoid exposure to the Zika virus.

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