

Brazil to launch anti-Zika app for Olympics

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Municipal agents prepare to spray anti-Zika mosquitos chemical product at the sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's health ministry said Thursday it will launch a smartphone application to track the Zika virus during the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and help visitors detect the disease.

The app will provide information on preventing Zika, ask users about their health and if necessary direct them to the nearest pharmacy or hospital via GPS.

It will be available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian, as well as Portuguese, and go online in May, the ministry said, as Brazil counts down to the opening ceremony on August 5.

Besides the virtual diagnosis, it will also feature a quiz in the form of an Olympics-inspired video game.

Brazil sounded the alarm over Zika when health officials noticed the mosquito-borne virus appeared to be causing a sharp rise in babies born with microcephaly, or abnormally small heads.

The flu-like disease, whose primary symptoms are relatively mild, has also been linked to nerve disorders in adults.

The World Health Organization has declared an international [health](#) emergency over the apparent link between Zika and microcephaly.

Health Minister Marcelo Castro emphasized that "the risk of infection will be considerably reduced" during the Olympics, which will be held during the southern hemisphere winter, when there are fewer mosquitoes.

But the situation remains "very worrying," he said.

Brazil has registered 1.5 million cases of Zika since detecting the outbreak last year.

It has confirmed 907 cases of microcephaly since October and is investigating nearly 4,300 suspected cases—a sharp rise from the 147 cases registered in 2014.

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