

Zika mosquito found in Chile, first time in decades

April 19 2016

The species of mosquito that carries the Zika virus has been found in mainland Chile for the first time in six decades, the country's health minister said Monday.

Chile was, with Canada, one of just two states in the Americas said to be free of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which carries the Zika virus that health authorities say causes birth defects in newborns.

But [health minister](#) Carmen Castillo said Monday scientists had identified a specimen of the mosquito in mainland Chile for the first time since the 1960s.

"It is an *Aedes aegypti*, which means that we have to take more precautions," she said.

The country had previously reported cases of Zika in people who contracted it abroad and one case of it being sexually transmitted in Chile.

Authorities had found *Aedes aegypti* on the country's remote Easter Island in the Pacific, but not on the mainland, largely protected from mosquitoes by mountains and deserts.

The specimen was found in the northern city of Arica, Castillo said.

Zika has been linked to cases of microcephaly in babies born to infected

mothers. Babies with microcephaly have unusually small heads and damaged brains.

Zika has also been linked to rare neurological diseases in adults.

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