

Florida probes non-travel Zika case on Gulf Coast

August 23 2016

Officials are investigating a new non-travel related case of Zika virus near the port city of Tampa, suggesting the local spread of Zika in Florida may have reached the state's Gulf Coast, the governor said Tuesday.

A statement from Governor Rick Scott's office said only that the Florida Department of Health "is investigating one new individual with non-travel related Zika in Pinellas County," but did not say where and gave no further details.

Pinellas County includes the cities of Clearwater and St. Petersburg—both of which are west of Tampa—about 300 miles (480 kilometers) northwest of Miami.

The Department of Health (DOH) "has begun door-to-door outreach and sampling in Pinellas County and mosquito abatement and reduction activities are also taking place," said a statement from Scott's office.

Meanwhile, four more new non-travel related cases of Zika have been identified in the Wynwood neighborhood of Miami, which was the first area to report local transmission of the virus in late July, he said.

"DOH still believes ongoing active transmission is only taking place within the small identified areas in Wynwood and Miami Beach in Miami-Dade County," the governor's statement said.

The five new cases bring Florida's total of locally transmitted Zika infections to 42.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week urged pregnant women to avoid areas of Miami Beach and Wynwood where mosquitoes are believed to be spreading the virus, which can cause birth defects.

CDC chief Tom Frieden also said pregnant women and their partners may want to consider avoiding Miami-Dade County entirely.

Zika can be spread by the bite of an infected mosquito, or by sexual contact.

In four out of five cases, those who are infected show no symptoms.

Others may experience a rash, pink eye, and body pain—all of which clear up within a week to 10 days.

However, the [virus](#) is particularly dangerous for [pregnant women](#) because it can cross the placenta and infect the baby's developing brain, leading to a condition known as microcephaly.

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