

New Zika zone identified in Miami

October 13 2016

Florida has identified a new area in Miami where the mosquito-borne Zika virus is being transmitted locally, in addition to a previously described zone in Miami Beach, officials said Thursday.

The new area spans about one square mile (2.6 square kilometers) in the northwestern part of the city, said a statement by Governor Rick Scott.

The Department of Health "has identified five people, two women and three men, in the new area," Scott said.

"Three live in this one square mile area. The other two either work in or have visited this area."

He said the confirmation of a fifth case came Thursday, meaning the area had met the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "criteria for a new zone."

All five of the people infected are classified as having "non-travel related cases," which could mean they were bitten by mosquitoes carrying Zika in the area, or they were infected by sexual contact.

"Pregnant women are advised to avoid non-essential travel to the impacted areas in Miami-Dade County," said the Department of Health.

Florida has reported 1,021 cases of Zika, including 155 non-travel related infections and 106 infections involving pregnant women this year.

This summer, Florida became the first state in the continental United States to report the local spread of Zika when a cluster of cases was discovered in the arts district of Wynwood, north of downtown.

That area has since been declared clear of any mosquitoes that might be spreading Zika, and health authorities have credited aerial insecticide spraying for eliminating the infected mosquitoes.

The Zika virus is particularly dangerous to pregnant women because it can cause birth defects such as microcephaly, in which babies are born with unusually small heads and deformed brains.

Zika infection has also been linked to a nerve and immune disorder called Guillain-Barre syndrome.

In four out of five cases, Zika causes no symptoms at all.

Those who do report symptoms typically have a rash and body aches.

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