

Bolivia reports first three Zika-linked microcephaly cases

2 November 2016

Bolivia has detected its first three cases of microcephaly caused by the Zika virus, local media reported Wednesday, citing health authorities.

Two babies were born with the [birth defect](#) in September and a third in October, said the director of the public health service for the department of Santa Cruz, Aida Aguilera, quoted by local newspaper El Dia de Santa Cruz.

She said the eastern region had registered 127 cases of Zika, including 57 pregnant women—16 of whom have yet to give birth.

"Zika is here to stay in Bolivia for a number of years," said local health official Roberto Torrez.

Zika is blamed for causing microcephaly—or an abnormally small head size—in babies born to infected mothers.

The World Health Organization declared an international public health emergency in February over the link between the virus and the debilitating neurological disorder.

Zika, which is mainly mosquito-borne but can also be sexually transmitted, has swept much of Latin America since first being detected in Brazil last year.

Bolivia confirmed in January that the virus was being locally transmitted there. Santa Cruz department declared a "red alert" in March over a surge in cases.

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