

Haiti hit with Zika virus outbreak: official

15 January 2016

Haiti's health ministry said Friday the country has been hit by an outbreak of the Zika virus, a mosquito-borne ailment similar to dengue fever that is rapidly spreading through the Caribbean.

Health Minister Florence Duperval Guillaume confirmed the outbreak at a press conference, saying that she too, was recovering from a bout of the illness.

"Even I fell ill," the minister said, although she did not have the diagnosis confirmed by testing.

A health lab in Trinidad and Tobago confirmed on Thursday that five out of 11 Haitian blood samples tested positive for the disease—a finding suggesting that it could be rampant in this impoverished nation.

There have been no known fatalities from Zika, but the virus is of particular concern to [pregnant women](#), because it can lead to birth defects and miscarriage.

Zika is spread by the Aedes genus of mosquitoes, some varieties of which also spread [dengue virus](#), yellow fever virus and Chikungunya.

A female mosquito bites an infected person and then carries the virus to the next person she bites.

Symptoms, which usually are relatively mild, can include fever, rash, conjunctivitis and headache. In more serious cases, they can include muscle pain, swelling and an itchy rash.

Haitian officials have been taken to task for what critics said has been a slow response to the outbreak.

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