

Panama reports 4 cases of Zika-related microcephaly

5 May 2016



In this Feb. 4, 2016 file photo, *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to be tested for various diseases perch inside a container at the Gorgas Memorial Laboratory in Panama City. Health authorities in Panama said Thursday, May 5, 2016 they've identified four cases of the birth defect microcephaly linked to the Zika virus. The mosquito-borne Zika virus can cause microcephaly, a severe birth defect in which babies are born with abnormally small heads. (AP Photo/Arnulfo Franco, File)

In all four cases, either the mother, the baby or both tested positive for Zika.

Panama has had 264 confirmed Zika cases, with 11 in [pregnant women](#).

The mosquito-borne Zika virus can cause microcephaly, a severe [birth defect](#) in which babies are born with abnormally small heads and brain damage.

The phenomenon was first detected in Brazil, where experts say there are nearly 1,200 confirmed cases of microcephaly.

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Health authorities in Panama said Thursday that they have identified four cases of the birth defect microcephaly linked to the Zika virus.

The Health Department's chief epidemiologist said all four cases occurred among mothers of the Guna Yala indigenous group. Dr. Israel Cedeno said two of the four babies died at Panama City hospitals.

Mothers from outlying provinces often travel to the capital to give birth, so it was unclear where they were infected. None of the four had been identified as having had Zika before giving birth.

The Guna Yala people inhabit a stretch of low coast along Panama's Atlantic shore.

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