

India confirms first Zika virus cases: WHO

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The Indian health ministry has confirmed its first cases of the Zika virus, the World Health Organisation has said, the latest nation to be affected by the mosquito-borne virus that sparked global concern.

Zika—which can cause babies to be born with microcephaly, or abnormally small heads—has affected dozens of countries around the world since it was first detected in 2015, although the WHO lifted its international health emergency status for the [virus](#) in November.

The Zika [cases](#) in India, which included a pregnant woman, were picked up in routine laboratory screening in western Gujarat state over the period of more than a year, the WHO said on its website on Friday.

It said the cases "suggest low transmission of Zika virus" in India.

But it warned that more cases may come to light in the future and called on authorities to strengthen the monitoring of Zika-like symptoms.

There was no update on the current health status of the detected cases in the report.

Since Zika erupted on a large scale in mid-2015, more than 1.5 million people have been infected, mostly in Brazil and other countries in South America. Some 70 countries have been impacted.

Zika may lead to an itchy rash but often causes no symptoms, making it hard to track.

In rare cases the virus can cause brain defects such as microcephaly, an irreversible condition in which the child's brain and skull are unusually small and misshapen.

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which carries Zika and the dengue and chikungunya viruses, is widely prevalent in India.

The country was on alert at the peak of the global virus outbreak, but no cases of the infection have been reported until now.

The WHO has said no vaccine is likely to be available until 2020.

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