

First case of Zika virus confirmed in Putnam

Second county resident is also being tested for virus

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The first positive case of Zika virus has been confirmed in Putnam County.

A county resident tested positive for the virus, the Putnam County Department of Health said on Friday in a released statement. A second resident is also being tested for the virus.

The Health Department confirmed both residents had recently traveled out of the country. The person who tested positive in Putnam brings the state's total confirmed cases to 16.

A Rockland County woman was also diagnosed with the Zika virus last week. The woman, who recently traveled to South America, is not pregnant and is expected to recover.

Zika has spread to more than 25 nations and territories in the Western Hemisphere. Among the countries where the virus has been found are: Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The disease causes a range of symptoms including joint pain and high fevers. There is no cure or treatment for the illness. Researchers suggest the virus can also be transmitted through sexual activity of a person who is already infected.

The spread of the virus has been linked to a surge in babies born with microcephaly — a smaller than normal head which is usually accompanied by severe brain damage. Researchers are still trying to figure out the connection but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending that pregnant women postpone travel to those regions.

Physicians in the Lower Hudson Valley have additionally been advising pregnant women to cancel their plans to areas identified as high risk for the Zika virus.

The World Health Organization declared a public health emergency in connection with the outbreak at the beginning of February.

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