

Chikungunya Virus Confirmed in Costa Rica



San José, June 10 (PL-RHC) -- The Health Ministry confirmed the possible presence of the chikungunya virus in Costa Rica and warned of the tendency of the illness to spread, which may strain health services.

Authorities of the surveillance department of the ministry said that at least six suspected cases of the illness have been detected so far. The illness is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* and the *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes.

Both vectors also transmit dengue fever, another epidemic that has hit almost all Latin American countries during the rainy season, mainly since the 90s.

Chikungunya is a new illness in the region, which causes great disability in the people infected, explained the specialist of Health Surveillance Dr Roberto Castro, as quoted by the on-line newspaper Costa Rica Hoy.

According to the doctor, 80 percent of people affected suffer serious attacks to their general state for two months; some 50 percent reach a third, more serious period and five percent reach a fourth period two years later, with serious injuries even in their joints.

"The only remedy is to eliminate its breeding grounds, this is the only vaccine against this new illness," stressed Castro. He added: "This is not to scare people, but for them to take the necessary steps to eliminate the breeding grounds and minimize the spread of the virus."

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