

Don't shake hands, Uganda president urges amid Ebola-like Marburg threat

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Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on Wednesday called on people to stop shaking hands as the country works to contain the Ebola-like Marburg virus, which has killed one person.

"If I don't shake your hand, please don't think I'm impolite, we must stop," Museveni told a national breakfast prayer meeting in the capital Kampala.

"To control Ebola and Marburg, be open and say you can't shake hands."

Three Ugandans are being monitored in medical isolation in case they have contracted the Marburg virus, health officials said Tuesday, after the death of a hospital worker from the virus was announced on Sunday.

Two are being held in the national isolation centre in Entebbe, outside the capital Kampala, while the third, a seven-year-old boy, is in an isolation ward at Mpigi, some 35 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of the city.

The medical technician, aged 30, died in the Mengo hospital where he worked in the capital of the east African country on September 28, 11 days after falling ill, the authorities said.

So far, 99 people he had been in contact with have been monitored, but with no other confirmed cases.

The government has made repeated appeals to the public "to remain alert" and observe the precautions to control the spread of the virus.

"We have a weakness in Africa of not confronting the truth," Museveni added.

The Marburg virus is one of the most deadly known pathogens. Like Ebola, it causes severe bleeding, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. The virus has a 21-day incubation period.

The Marburg virus is also transmitted via contact with bodily fluids and fatality rates range from 25 to 80 percent.

A Marburg outbreak in Uganda in October 2012 killed 10 people, about half of those who were confirmed infected with the disease.

The Ebola epidemic that has been raging in west Africa has so far claimed almost 3,500 lives, with Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone worst hit.

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