

## Benin says Lassa fever kills 9, no Ebola found

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Nine people have died in Benin from Lassa fever, a viral disease common in West Africa with symptoms similar to Ebola, the country's health minister said.

An outbreak of Ebola is pummeling the three West African countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, and some cases have turned up elsewhere. But so far no Ebola cases have been confirmed in Benin, Health Minister Dorothee Kinde Gazard told reporters late Tuesday.

Authorities will double-check those results with more tests, said Youssouf Gamatie, the representative for the World Health Organization in the country.

The Lassa fever deaths happened in Tanguieta, 370 miles (600 kilometers) north of the capital, said Gazard. In all, 15 cases of Lassa have been detected, and Gazard said she thought the outbreak would be quickly contained. Authorities are monitoring 170 people who had contact with the sick for signs of Lassa.

In West Africa, there are about 100,000 to 300,000 cases of Lassa fever each year and about 5,000 deaths. The Lassa virus is carried by rodents and is transmitted to humans through contact with their urine or droppings. It can also be transmitted from person to person through direct contact with a sick person's bodily fluids, though that is more rare.

Lassa fever is in the same virus family as Ebola, which has killed 5,400

people in the current outbreak, the first to hit West Africa.

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