

Nigeria meningitis deaths rise to 813

April 26 2017

More than 800 people have died in a meningitis outbreak in Nigeria but the disease is now spreading more slowly, health minister Isaac Adewole said on Wednesday.

"As of yesterday (Tuesday), the number of deaths stood at 813," he told reporters in Abuja after a cabinet meeting. "As of now, we are noticing a decline.

"This is week 16. This is also expected because we are moving away from the active season. We are confident that in the next couple of weeks everything will be over."

The [outbreak](#) of meningitis C is concentrated in northern Nigeria, where a mass vaccination programme has begun to limit its spread.

On April 19, the government said 745 people had died—a spike of more than 50 percent from the previous week—and there had been more than 8,000 suspected cases.

Five northern states accounted for the majority of cases.

Nigeria lies on the so-called "meningitis belt" of sub-Saharan Africa that stretches from Senegal in the west to Ethiopia in the east, where outbreaks are a regular occurrence.

Early prevention of the disease, which is spread through coughs, sneezes and close contact, was hindered by a lack of available vaccine for the

type of meningitis C strain responsible.

Adewole said the government was exploring the creation of a joint venture with a local drug manufacturer to produce vaccines in Nigeria itself.

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