

Ebola cases in DR Congo rise to 78, 44 dead

August 17 2018

Seventy-eight cases of Ebola have been recorded in an outbreak in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo, claiming 44 lives, DRC officials and the World Health Organization (WHO) said Friday.

The latest [outbreak](#) of the viral disease, which is highly contagious and frequently fatal if untreated, has prompted a visit by the head of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the [health ministry](#) said in a statement.

"In all, 78 cases of haemorrhagic fever have been reported in the region, of which 51 are confirmed and 27 probable" while "24 suspect cases are under investigation", according to reports from Congolese authorities and the WHO.

Confirmed cases are verified by way of laboratory tests on samples taken from patients. The cases treated as "probable" often concern diseased people who had a close epidemiological link with confirmed cases, but have not been tested.

Congolese authorities reported "two deaths of confirmed cases at Beni"—a trading town with a population approaching a quarter of a million people in North Kivu province.

There were also "five new confirmed cases at Mabalako, including a health worker at the Health Reference Centre in Mangina," the epicentre of the outbreak in the Beni region.

"We are expecting to see more cases," WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters in Geneva.

The outbreak is the tenth to strike the DRC since 1976, when Ebola was first identified and named after a river in the north of the country.

It affects a part of the country wracked by violence for more than 20 years, from all-out war to insurgency and sustained ethnic clashes.

Forty-one deaths were reported in North Kivu and three in neighbouring Ituri region to the north, according to the health ministry.

Congolese Health Minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga had talks with the director of the CDC, Robert Redfield, regarding CDC training programmes for epidemiologists in the field, an official statement said.

The ministry's directorate for [disease control](#) announced on Tuesday that doctors in Beni had started to use a novel treatment called mAb114 to treat patients with Ebola.

The treatment is "the first therapeutic drug against the virus to be used in an active Ebola epidemic in the DRC," it said.

mAb114 is an antibody initially isolated from a survivor of an Ebola outbreak in the western DRC city of Kikwit in 1995, it added.

Ebola has long been considered incurable, though swift isolation and the rapid treatment of symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration has helped some of the patients to survive.

The quest for a vaccine grew increasingly urgent during an Ebola epidemic that killed more than 11,300 people in West African neighbouring states Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2013-15.

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