

DR Congo hopes to declare end to Ebola outbreak in April

March 9 2020



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DR Congo health officials said Monday they were "keeping fingers

crossed" to declare a deadly 19-month Ebola epidemic over next month, while monitoring former patients for signs of the virus.

While the world's attention has been focused on the coronavirus, the last patient under treatment for Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo was discharged on Tuesday.

If no more cases are diagnosed, the epidemic will officially end on April 12, or 42 days from the date of the last confirmed patient's second negative test.

"Today, March 9 is the 21st day without any new confirmed case," said Jean-Jacques Muyembe, who is in charge of the Ebola fight.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed that until then, there are no incidents," he told a news conference.

"The greatest challenge for us today is to follow up on survivors because some continue to secrete the virus in their seminal fluids," he said, adding that they were being treated to avoid infecting their partners.

Traces of the virus were present in the sperm of men between one and 18 months after they were infected, The British medical journal, *The Lancet*, said in January 2017.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus stressed the importance of monitoring while addressing a news conference in Geneva.

"During the last Ebola epidemic, we saw new cases even after the end of the epidemic," he said. "That is why we are continuing to follow up on more than 1,100 survivors."

DR Congo's most recent Ebola outbreak was first identified in August 2018, and WHO declared it a "public [health](#) emergency of international concern" last July.

It has killed 2,264 people and is the vast central African country's 10th Ebola epidemic since 1976.

It is also the second-most deadly Ebola [epidemic](#) in history, after an outbreak killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa from 2013 to 2016.

Since that time, health authorities have gained a more powerful weapon against the disease: vaccination. Nearly 320,00 people have been vaccinated so far in DR Congo.

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