First cholera death in Lebanon as outbreak spreads from Syria

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Lebanon has recorded its first death from cholera as cases surge after an outbreak of the extremely virulent disease in neighbouring Syria, the health ministry said Wednesday.

Lebanon has recorded 26 cases of cholera this month, as the country struggles amid [poor sanitation](#) and crumbling infrastructure after three years of unprecedented economic crisis.

"The common point between these cases is that the majority of patients are displaced Syrians," Health Minister Firas Abiad said on Tuesday.

"The absence of basic services, like [safe water](#) and sewerage networks, in places where refugees gather, constitutes a fertile ground for the epidemic to spread in Lebanon."

Syria has recorded 41 deaths from cholera and over 700 cases, the country's official SANA news agency reported Tuesday.

The United Nations warned earlier this month that the outbreak is "evolving alarmingly".

Lebanon hosts more than a million refugees from Syria's civil war, which broke out in 2011.

Most live in poverty, and their [living conditions](#) have worsened due to Lebanon's economic woes.

Cholera is generally contracted from contaminated food or water, and causes diarrhoea and vomiting.

It can spread in residential areas that lack proper sewerage networks or mains drinking water.

Cholera can kill within hours if left untreated, according to the World Health Organization, but many of those infected will have no or mild symptoms.

It can be easily treated with oral rehydration solution, but more severe cases may require intravenous fluids and antibiotics, the WHO says.

Worldwide, the disease affects between 1.3 million and four million people each year, killing between 21,000 and 143,000 people.

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