

E. Guinea Marburg deaths rise to nine on wider fears

March 30 2023

The death toll from an outbreak of Marburg virus in Equatorial Guinea has reached nine, the health ministry told AFP on Thursday amid World Health Organization estimates the real toll is double that.

The outbreak of the hemorrhagic fever has spread beyond the province of Kie-Ntem, where it caused the first known deaths in January and reached Bata, the economic capital of the west African nation.

The ministry raised the confirmed [death toll](#) from seven just a day after the WHO urged the country to report all cases over fears transmission may be more widespread.

The reported cases are in three provinces 150 kilometers apart, "suggesting wider transmission of the virus", said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday.

On March 22, WHO Africa regional headquarters said it knew of 20 further probable cases, all of whom were dead and the organization's alert and response director Abdi Mahamud noted "signs of the wide spread of transmission that are making us (worried)".

He added: "This outbreak, as it stands, is larger and may be seen in more provinces. More than the case count number, it's the extent of the geographical spread."

The Marburg virus causes severe fever, often accompanied by bleeding

and organ failure.

It is part of the so-called filovirus family that also includes Ebola, which has wreaked havoc in several previous outbreaks in Africa.

Citing nine "laboratory confirmed deaths", the ministry tweeted there were a further 13 positive cases, two of whom had been hospitalized and another who had recovered while "a total of 825 contacts have been followed up".

The WHO has warned of a potential large scale epidemic which could spread to neighboring Gabon and Cameroon.

Tanzania also announced last week five deaths from Marburg, but insisted it has the spread under control after sending a rapid response team to the northwestern region of Kagera which borders Uganda.

The suspected natural source of the Marburg virus is the African fruit bat, which carries the pathogen but does not fall sick from it.

There are currently no vaccines or antiviral treatments, but potential treatments, including blood products, [immune therapies](#) and drug therapies, as well as early candidate vaccines being evaluated.

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