

WHO warns DR Congo mpox epidemic could spread internationally

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The World Health Organization warned on Friday that the mpox epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo could spread internationally, as sexual transmissions accelerate.

The infectious disease, formerly known as monkeypox, was first

identified in humans in 1970 in DR Congo.

It has been endemic for years in several West and Central African countries, where [outbreaks](#) often began when the virus was transmitted to humans from infected animals.

"We are concerned that there may be further international transmission" from the DRC, Dr. Rosamund Lewis, WHO's technical lead for mpox, told reporters in Geneva, via Zoom.

"There's a rapidly expanding outbreak in the country," this year with over 13,000 suspected cases of Mpox, "which is more than twice the number of previous reported in any prior year," she said.

Those cases have led to over 600 deaths, Lewis added.

The WHO, which had already sounded the alarm in late November about the DR Congo epidemic, on Friday announced it was sending an evaluation team to the country.

Last week Cambodia reported its first case of the disease.

Lewis said the WHO had been made aware of a suspected outbreak on a [cruise ship](#) that had sailed in South East Asia, but lacked information.

A spike in infections last year in Europe and the United States, outside the disease's endemic areas, prompted the WHO to declare a public health emergency of international concern, the highest alarm it can sound, in July 2022.

It ended the alert in May this year but advised populations to remain vigilant.

The global outbreak has mainly affected men who have sex with men and who have recently had sex with one or multiple partners, according to the WHO.

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