

Burundi records first three mpox cases

July 25 2024



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Burundi has detected its first three cases of mpox, the health ministry announced Thursday, raising fears that a new, deadlier strain of the virus had crossed the border.

Formerly known as monkeypox, mpox is an infectious disease caused by a [virus](#) transmitted to humans by infected animals that can also be passed from human to human through close physical contact.

A [global outbreak](#) two years ago led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare mpox a public health emergency of international concern, the highest alarm it can sound.

Burundian authorities were alerted on July 22 to three "suspected cases" in two hospitals, one in a working-class district of the economic capital Bujumbura and another on the city's outskirts, a [health ministry](#) statement said.

"The three samples tested positive for Monkeypox," the ministry said, adding that the three cases were "progressing well, and a list of contacts has already been drawn up and is being followed-up on".

On July 11, the WHO warned of a swelling outbreak of a new deadlier strain of the virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which borders Burundi.

That outbreak "shows no sign of slowing" WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned.

At the time, the WHO reported a total of 11,000 cases, including 445 deaths, with children being the worst-affected.

Rosamund Lewis, the WHO's technical lead for mpox, said the UN health agency was "very concerned", and warned that the virus could move "cross border... because borders are very porous with neighboring countries" in the region.

Mpox was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the DRC.

It has since been mainly limited to certain West and Central African nations, with people mainly catching it from infected animals, such as when eating bushmeat.

Then in May 2022, mpox infections surged worldwide, mostly affecting gay and bisexual men.

That surge was driven by a new subtype, dubbed Clade II, taking over from the Clade I subtype.

It was that spike in cases that prompted the WHO to sound its public health emergency of international concern alert in July 2022, which it then ended in May 2023.

But since last September, a new, deadlier Clade I strain has been spreading in the DRC, with the [outbreak](#) beginning among sex workers and affecting non-LGBTQ people too.

Testing revealed it was a mutated variant of Clade I, called Clade Ib.

The WHO recommends populations continue to remain vigilant over the virus.

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Citation: Burundi records first three mpox cases (2024, July 25) retrieved 27 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-07-burundi-mpox-cases.html>

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