

Congo says it will receive its first mpox vaccines next week to address new global emergency

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Children suffering from mpox wait for a treatment at a clinic in Munigi, eastern Congo, Monday, Aug. 19, 2024. Congo will receive the first vaccine doses to address its mpox outbreak next week from the United States, the country's health minister said Monday, days after the World Health Organization declared mpox outbreaks in Africa a global emergency. Credit: AP Photo/Moses Sawasawa

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Mpox cases have been confirmed among [children](#) and adults in more than a dozen African countries, and a new form of the virus is spreading. Few vaccine doses are available on the continent.

[Congo has the vast majority of the mpox cases](#) and currently needs 3 million [vaccine doses](#). The U.S. and Japan have offered to donate vaccines, Health Minister Roger Kamba told journalists. He did not say how many doses would be sent or when the ones from Japan would arrive.

The WHO has reported over 17,000 mpox cases and over 500 deaths worldwide this year. More than 96% of all cases and deaths have been in Congo, whose [health system](#) has long struggled to contain [disease outbreaks](#) over the country's vast area and poor infrastructure. Children under 15 account for more than 70% of the cases and 85% of deaths in Congo.

Scientists are also concerned by a new version of mpox in Congo that might be more easily transmitted. Last week, Sweden reported its first case of the new version. Officials said the risk to the general public was considered "very low" and that they expected sporadic imported cases to continue.



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Unlike in previous mpox outbreaks, where lesions were mostly seen on the chest, hands and feet, the new form causes milder symptoms and lesions on the genitals. That makes it harder to detect, meaning people might sicken others without knowing they're infected. Mpox is not airborne and typically requires close, skin-to-skin contact to spread.

The WHO has said mpox was recently identified for the first time in four East African countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. All

of those outbreaks were linked to the epidemic in Congo.

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