

WHO says mpox outbreaks 'can be stopped'

August 26 2024



Credit: AI-generated image

Outbreaks of mpox in Central Africa "can be stopped", the World Health Organization said on Monday, but \$135 million of funding may be needed to tackle the disease's spread.

Earlier in August, the WHO declared an international health emergency after a surge in cases linked to a new mpox strain in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has since spread beyond its borders.

"The mpox outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries can be controlled, and can be stopped," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is quoted as saying in the statement.

But "doing so requires a comprehensive and coordinated plan of action," the director-general added.

Launched on Monday, the WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan covers the period from September 2024 to February 2025, predicting a \$135 million funding need to carry it out.

It will soon launch an appeal to finance the global response, which will be carried out with partners including the African Union's public health watchdog.

In the meantime, it has released around \$1.5 million from its emergency reserve fund.

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.

It causes fever, muscle pains and skin lesions and in an increasing number of cases, death.

The disease's resurgence and the detection in the DRC of a new strain, dubbed Clade 1b, prompted the WHO to declare its highest international alert level on August 14.

It had previously declared an emergency over the international spread of the Clade 2b strain of mpox, which mostly affected men who have sex with men. That alarm was lifted in May 2023.

At the strategic plan's presentation to WHO member states on Friday, Tedros said more than 100,000 confirmed cases had been reported since the outbreak's start in 2022.

The DRC has been worst-hit with 90 percent of 2024's reported [mpox](#) cases, with "more than sixteen thousand suspected cases—including 575 deaths—this year alone".

"The virus continues to circulate at low levels globally," Tedros added, but the "African Region has had an unprecedented increase and geographical expansion".

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Citation: WHO says mpox outbreaks 'can be stopped' (2024, August 26) retrieved 30 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-mpox-outbreaks.html>

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