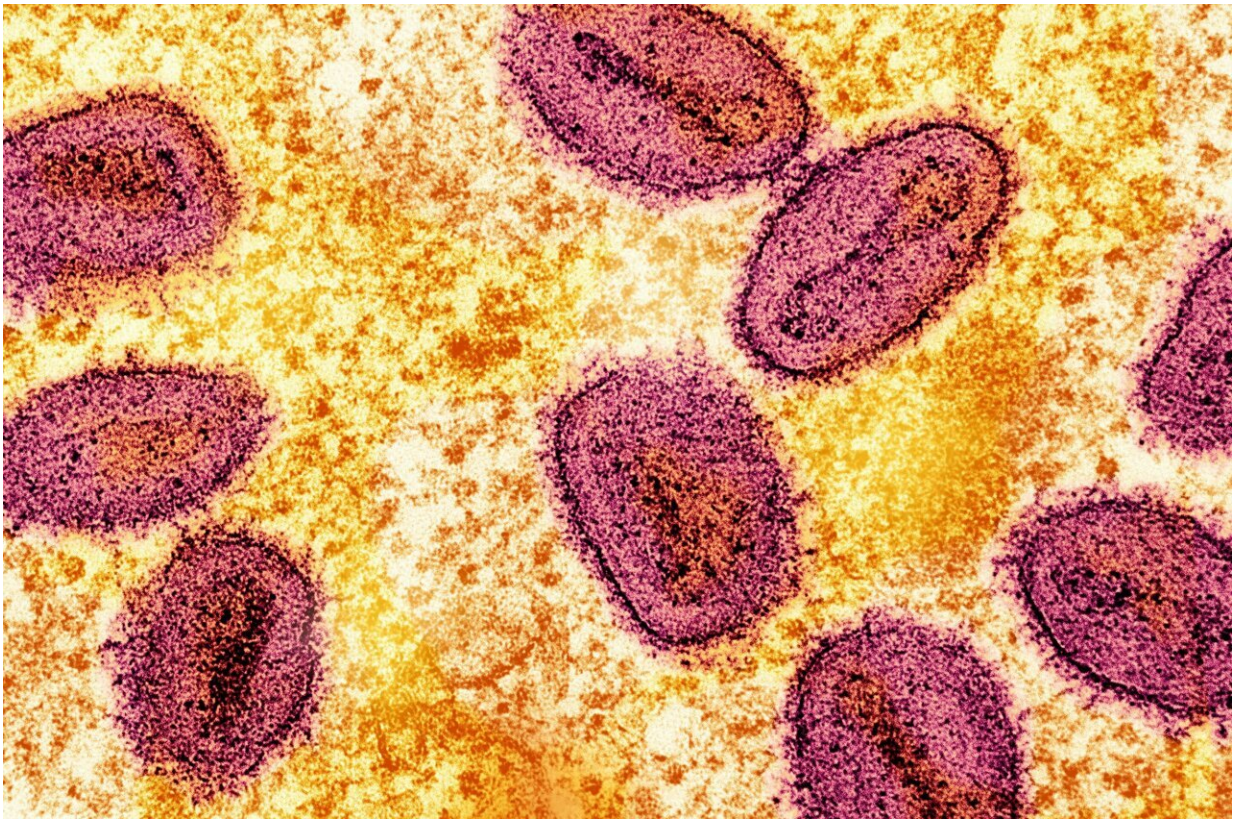


First mpox vaccines due in DR Congo on Thursday

September 4 2024



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The first delivery of almost 100,000 doses of mpox vaccines will arrive in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Thursday, the African Union's health watchdog said, with a total of 200,000 jabs expected this week.

The vast central Africa country of around 100 million people is at the epicenter of the mpox outbreak, with cases and deaths rising.

"We are very pleased with the arrival of this first batch of vaccines in the DRC," Jean Kaseya, head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told AFP, adding that more than 99,000 doses were expected on Thursday.

More than 17,500 cases and 629 deaths have been reported in the country since the start of the year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The first cargo of vaccine doses will be transported onboard an airplane leaving the Danish capital Copenhagen on Wednesday evening and are due to arrive at Kinshasa's international airport on Thursday at 1100 GMT.

Another flight carrying the rest of the 200,000 jabs is scheduled to arrive before the end of the week, Africa CDC confirmed. These first vaccines come from the laboratory of Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic.

According to the WHO, the DRC's government plans to start rolling out the jabs at the weekend.

'Health war'

UNICEF says that thousands of children in the DRC and neighboring countries are at serious risk of contracting the disease.

"We are in a health war against mpox. To face this disease, we need you," Congolese Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba said on X on Tuesday.

In Africa, mpox is now present in at least 13 countries, including Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic, according to figures from Africa CDC dated August 27.

On Wednesday, Guinea said it had recorded its first confirmed case of the disease, convening an emergency meeting in response.

A health official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP that the case was discovered in a sub-prefecture close to the Liberian border.

Outside the continent, the virus has also been detected in Sweden, Pakistan and the Philippines.

Other countries have also promised to send vaccine doses to African nations.

Spain has promised 500,000 doses, with France and Germany each pledging 100,000.

The WHO declared an international emergency over mpox on August 14, concerned by the surge in cases of the new Clade 1b strain in the DRC that spread to nearby countries.

Both the Clade 1b and Clade 1a strains are present in the DRC.

The WHO's Africa bureau said at the end of last month that 10,000 vaccine doses would be delivered to Nigeria—Bavarian Nordic vaccines donated by the United States.

This was the first African country to receive doses outside of clinical trials.

Formerly called monkeypox, the virus was discovered in 1958 in

Denmark, in monkeys kept for research.

It was first discovered in humans in 1970 in what is now the DRC.

Mpox is caused by a virus transmitted to humans by infected animals but can also be passed from human to human through close physical contact.

The disease causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions.

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