

Ebola claims up to 33 lives in DR Congo: health ministry

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An outbreak of Ebola fever in the Democratic Republic of Congo may have killed up to 33 people, while the number of suspected cases has risen, the health ministry said on Thursday.

A total of 79 cases was recorded, including 19 confirmed positive after [laboratory analysis](#), 32 probable cases and 28 suspected cases, while 33 deaths were registered by September 25, the ministry announced. Seven of the deaths were proven to be caused by Ebola.

The [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) said that the [fatality rate](#) was almost 42 percent.

The WHO added that a baby born prematurely in the isolation centre in Isiro—the epicentre of the epidemic in northeastern DR Congo—to a mother infected by the [Ebola virus](#) had died on Thursday, the statement said.

In DR Congo, it was the first time a pregnant Ebola patient had given birth, because "Ebola and pregnancy are almost incompatible", Health Minister Felix Kabange Numbi said after the baby was born.

To date, there is no treatment nor vaccine for Ebola, which kills between 25 percent and 90 percent of patients depending on the strain of the virus. There have been eight outbreaks in DR Congo.

The disease is transmitted by direct contact with blood, faeces and sweat,

by sexual contact and by unprotected handling of contaminated corpses.

Currently, 167 people who have been in contact with the 79 reported cases are under surveillance.

"We need to manage to follow all the contacts closely and regularly and to that end, we need to strengthen awareness among the population," Benoit Kebela, the head of the [health ministry](#)'s unit to fight infectious diseases told AFP.

Among the 79 reported cases, 24 concern health workers.

"We are in control of the situation, because we were able to make efforts in hospital measures - we have protective equipment," added Dr Kebela, who was on a mission to Isiro.

An epidemic was declared in mid-August in Orientale province, but the international committee for the fight against [Ebola](#) has carried out research and dated the outbreak back to May.

The ministry of health, the WHO, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, and Doctors Without Borders (MSF - Medecins Sans Frontieres) are working in close collaboration to combat the outbreak.

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