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Bangladesh: Nipah virus outbreak

Confirmed cases of Nipah virus infection reported in seven administrative regions

Nipah virus (NiV) outbreaks are known to occur in Bangladesh [1]. Between January 2023 and as of 14 February 2023, a total of 11 cases of NiV infection, with eight deaths, were reported from seven administrative regions (Baliakandi, Bagatipara, Bhedorganj, Goalando, Godagari, Ishwardi, Naogaon Sadar and Shibpur). There has been an average of 14 cases per year since 2001, although since 2016, case numbers have averaged four per year [2].

NiV is a virus that spreads to humans from animals (a zoonosis); the natural hosts of the virus are fruit bats. Most human infections result from direct contact with sick animals, particularly pigs and bats, or their environments, which become contaminated with the virus [1,3].

Eating or drinking fruit or fruit products (such as raw date palm juice), contaminated with urine/saliva from infected fruit bats, is also a likely source of infection [4]. In Bangladesh, most outbreaks occur in the winter months (December to May) which coincides with the date harvest season in this country [1].

Person-to-person transmission of NiV has also been reported among family and care givers of NiV patients, including in hospital settings. Transmission of infection is by respiratory droplets or body fluids of an infected person [1,3].

NiV can cause a range of illnesses from asymptomatic infection to acute respiratory illness and fatal encephalitis. Treatment is limited to intensive supportive care to treat severe infections [4].

Advice for travellers

Before you travel

Check and follow the advice from the [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office](#) on safety, security, and any travel restrictions at your destination.

Check our [Country Information pages](#) to research general health risks, prevention advice and any vaccine recommendations or malaria advice for your destination.

There is currently no licensed vaccine to prevent NiV [4].

While you are away

The risk of NiV infection for tourists to Bangladesh is currently very low if the following precautions [4,5] are taken:

- Pay careful attention to personal hygiene.
- Do not consume raw date palm sap (NiV can survive in the palm sap for days). Raw or partially fermented date palm juice should be boiled.
- All fruit should be thoroughly washed with clean water and peeled before consumption; especially fruit found on the ground which may have been partially eaten by animals.

- Close, unprotected physical contact with people with NiV infection should be avoided. Avoid contact with blood or body fluids of anyone infected with NiV. Regular hand washing should be carried out after caring for or visiting sick people.
- Avoid contact with sick bats (e.g., areas where they roost), and pigs, as much as possible.
- Gloves and other protective clothing should be worn if handling sick animals or their tissues, and during slaughtering and culling.

The risk to other UK travellers (such as those visiting friends and family) may be higher, depending on activities undertaken (e.g., local practices such as collection of raw or fermented date sap) [4].

You should seek advice from a health professional if you develop symptoms whilst you are overseas.

When you return

If you think you, or anyone in your family has symptoms after you return to the UK you should seek medical advice. It is important to tell your healthcare provider about any recent travel to Bangladesh.

Advice for health professionals

In the UK NiV is classed as a high consequence infectious disease. UK Health Security Agency provides [Guidance: High consequence infectious diseases](#) for health professionals and for the [management of Nipah virus infections](#).

Healthcare professionals should be aware of the signs and symptoms of NiV in any patient with a relevant travel history and symptoms compatible with NiV infection, within 14 days of exposure. Specialist advice must be sought when persons suspected of having NiV infection are evaluated [4].

Health professionals caring for patients with suspected or confirmed NiV infection, or handling specimens from them, should always implement standard infection control precautions.

Resources

- [Outbreak Surveillance](#)
- [World Health Organization: Nipah virus infection](#)

References

1. Bruno L, Nappo MA, Ferrari L et al. Nipah Virus Disease: Epidemiological, Clinical, Diagnostic and Legislative Aspects of This Unpredictable Emerging Zoonosis. *Animals* 2023, 13(1), 159; [Accessed 17 February 2023]
2. Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research. Bangladesh. Nipah case update in 2023 (updated 14 February 2023). [Accessed 17 February 2023]
3. World Health Organization. Nipah virus infection. [Accessed 16 February 2023]
4. UK Health Security Agency. Nipah virus: epidemiology, outbreaks and guidance. Last updated 17 January 2019 [Accessed 17 February 2023]
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nipah virus: Prevention. [Accessed 17 February 2023]