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Marburg virus disease in Tanzania

The World Health Organization has reported a confirmed Marburg virus disease outbreak in Tanzania

On 14 January 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported an outbreak of suspected Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) in the Biharamulo and Muleba districts of Kagera region, in north-western Tanzania [1]. This was subsequently confirmed by the WHO on 20 January 2025 [1].

As of 20 January 2025, a total of 25 suspected cases and one confirmed across these two districts, have been reported. Contacts of the cases, including healthcare workers, are reported to have been identified and are under follow-up in both districts. The source of the outbreak is currently unknown [1].

A previous MVD outbreak in Tanzania, also in the Kagera region, occurred in [March 2023](#) and lasted for nearly two months, with nine cases including six deaths [2].

An emergency response by Tanzania's health authorities, with support from WHO, is underway. National rapid response teams have been deployed to support outbreak investigation and response; surveillance activities have been intensified [1, 2].

The reservoir host of Marburg virus, the fruit bat, is found widely across Africa [3]. This virus can spread to people from fruit bats and once introduced into the human population can spread through human-to-human transmission [4]. MVD can be a severe, often fatal haemorrhagic fever, which is very similar to Ebola virus disease [3, 4].

In the past MVD outbreaks and sporadic cases have occurred in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, Rwanda, South Africa (linked with travel from Zimbabwe) and Uganda [5]. The most recent outbreak was reported in Rwanda between September and December 2024.

While MVD is rare and very unusual in travellers, occasional cases have been reported in travellers who spent long periods in mines or caves inhabited by bat colonies [4].

Advice for travellers

Before you go

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

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

There is currently no licensed vaccine to protect against MVD, but several candidate vaccines are being investigated [3, 4].

While you are there

Remain aware of up-to-date, reliable information on specific areas affected, as these may change over time.

You can become infected with MVD if you have contact (such as through broken skin or mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, or mouth) with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people and with surfaces or materials (e.g. bedding, clothes) contaminated with these fluids [3, 4].

If you plan to travel to affected areas in Tanzania, follow these precautions to reduce your risk of infection:

- Wash your hands regularly and carefully using soap and water (or alcohol gel if soap is unavailable)
- Avoid contact with people with any symptoms of MVD, their bodily fluids, corpses and/or bodily fluids from deceased people
- Avoid participating in funeral or burial rituals
- Avoid visiting traditional healers
- Avoid handling, cooking or eating bush/wild meat (meat from wild/feral animals)
- Wash and peel all fruit and vegetables before eating
- Practise safer sex as there is a risk of sexual transmission from a person who has recovered from Marburg

Avoid visiting mines or bat caves and all contact with all wild animals; alive or dead, particularly bats. If you decide to visit mines or caves inhabited by fruit bat colonies, wear gloves and other appropriate protective clothing, including masks.

For non-urgent medical care or if you become unwell whilst you are away, speak to your insurance company or local healthcare provider for advice on the most suitable place to access healthcare.

When you return

Get medical advice if you become ill within 21 days of returning home. Call NHS 111 or contact your GP by phone. Although it is very unlikely you have MVD, you should mention your dates and itinerary of travel and any potential exposure to the virus.

Other infectious diseases like malaria are present in Tanzania. You should be aware of the signs and symptoms of malaria and should seek immediate medical attention if these occur either while you are in Tanzania or up to a year after you return to the UK.

Advice for those working in affected areas

If you are living in or planning to visit areas for work related reasons that might bring you into contact with the virus that causes MVD (e.g. humanitarian, healthcare), you should follow advice from your deploying organisation.

Organisations deploying staff in response to this outbreak must register with the [UKHSA returning workers scheme \(RWS\)](#) [6] and work according to [WHO infection prevention and control guidance](#).

If you are working with individuals suspected to be infected with MVD, you must follow infection prevention and control guidance on viral haemorrhagic fevers. Strict barrier techniques should be implemented and all staff provided with and trained in the use of protective equipment [7].

Advice for health professionals

Health professionals should remain alert for travellers returning from possible MVD affected areas who develop symptoms compatible with MVD. See [UKHSA's MVD information page](#). The [imported fever service](#) provides expert clinical advice for health professionals caring for travellers returning to the UK with a fever.

Health professionals should practise strict universal precautions when caring for patients when MVD is suspected in accordance with the [National Infection Prevention and Control guidance](#).

Guidance and information about [high consequence infectious disease and their management in England](#) and [further information and guidance about Marburg fever](#) is available from UK Health Security Agency. Rapid transfer to a designated High Consequence Infectious Disease Treatment Centre will be arranged for confirmed cases in the UK [6].

UKHSA has specialised laboratory facilities to provide a definitive MVD diagnosis at the [Rare and imported pathogens laboratory](#) (RIPL).

Resources

- [Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens: Viral haemorrhagic fever: ACDP algorithm and guidance on management of patients](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Ebola and Marburg haemorrhagic fevers: outbreaks and case locations](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Global high consequence infectious disease events](#)
- [World Health Organization: Marburg virus disease](#)
- [Viral haemorrhagic fevers](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Tanzania confirms outbreak of Marburg Disease. 20 January 2025 \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization. Disease Outbreak. News 14 January 2025. Outbreak of suspected Marburg Virus Disease - United Republic of Tanzania. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
3. [UK Health Security Agency. Marburg virus disease: origins, reservoirs, transmission and guidelines. Last updated 30 December 2024. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
4. [World Health Organization. Marburg virus disease. 23 October 2024. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
5. [UK Health Security Agency. Ebola and Marburg haemorrhagic fevers: outbreaks and case locations. Last updated 6 January 2025. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
6. [UK Health Security Agency. Ebola and Marburg: returning workers scheme \(RWS\). Last updated 27 December 2024. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)
7. [World Health Organization. Infection prevention and control guideline for Ebola and Marburg disease. August 2023. \[Accessed 20 January 2025\]](#)