

DR Congo starts countdown to end of Ebola outbreak in east

23 March 2021



Ebola virus particles (red) on a larger cell. Credit: NIAID

The Democratic Republic of Congo, where the deadly Ebola virus first emerged in 1976, has begun a countdown to the official end of its latest outbreak, this time in the east of the country, health authorities said Tuesday.

The last patient to be treated for Ebola tested negative for a second time on Sunday, triggering the 42-day countdown from Monday, the World Health Organization's DR Congo office said.

The period represents twice the average maximum duration of Ebola's incubation.

Since the virus re-emerged on February 7 in the DRC's North Kivu province, 12 cases have been recorded, half of them fatal.

The virus, which jumps to humans from infected animals, is transmitted between people through bodily fluids. The main symptoms are fevers, vomiting, bleeding and diarrhoea.

According to the WHO's last status report last Thursday, 1,606 people had been vaccinated against Ebola in the DRC, a vast former Belgian colony in central Africa, today one of the world's [poorest countries](#).

The vaccine, developed by the US lab Merck Sharpe and Dohme, was first used during the 10th Ebola outbreak, which lasted from August 2018 to June 2020 in North and South Kivu and neighbouring Ituri province, as well as during the 11th outbreak, in the western province of Equateur between July and November 2020.

With more than 2,200 recorded deaths, the 10th epidemic is considered the worst to hit the DR Congo since 1976, lasting from August 2018 to June 2020.

The virus also struck Guinea, in West Africa, in mid-February, with 18 cases and nine deaths, according to the WHO.

Nearly 4,000 people have been vaccinated there.

The worst-ever Ebola outbreak began in December 2013 in southern Guinea before spreading to two neighbouring west African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The epidemic killed more than 11,300 people out of nearly 29,000 registered cases, according to WHO estimates.

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