

Marburg Virus Disease Fact Sheet

Rwanda (Updated November 12, 2024)

What is Marburg Virus Disease (MVD)

Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) is a rare but severe viral hemorrhagic fever affecting both humans and non-human primates, such as apes and monkeys. The disease is highly lethal, with fatality rates ranging from 20% to 90%. MVD is primarily found in sub-Saharan Africa.

Current Updates

Rwanda has reached a significant milestone in combating Marburg, with **no new cases reported since October 30** and the last hospitalized patient was discharged on November 8. This achievement has initiated the 42-day countdown required to declare the outbreak over. The progress underscores Rwanda's robust response efforts and support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners.

To date, there have been 66 confirmed cases, including 15 deaths. Approximately 75% of patients diagnosed with Marburg have recovered. The majority of those infected have been healthcare workers, particularly those in intensive care units. Contact tracing and testing efforts are ongoing. Additionally, the Rwandan Ministry of Health and its partners have initiated trials of a vaccine to mitigate the impact and spread of the virus.

Transmission & Symptoms of Marburg Virus Disease

Someone can become infected with Marburg disease if they have contact (such as through broken skin or mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, or mouth) with:

- Body fluids of a person who is sick with or died from Marburg virus disease
- Objects contaminated with their fluids like clothes, bedding, needles, and equipment
- Semen from a man who has recovered from infection with Marburg virus disease

A person infected with the Marburg virus can transmit the disease to others once they start showing symptoms. The virus is not contagious during the incubation period, which typically lasts between 2 and 21 days. However, as soon as symptoms like fever, headache,

muscle pain, or more severe signs such as vomiting, diarrhea, or bleeding begin, the infected individual becomes contagious.

Initial Marburg disease signs and symptoms include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Rash with both flat and raised bumps, often on the torso
- Chest pain
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea

As the disease advances, symptoms can become more severe, including liver failure, delirium, shock, bleeding (hemorrhaging), and multi-organ dysfunction.

Healthcare workers are at high risk of infection, especially when infection control measures are not strictly followed. Transmission can occur through close contact with infected patients, contaminated medical equipment, or needle-stick injuries. Such transmission often leads to more severe disease, rapid deterioration, and possibly higher mortality rates.

Traditional burial practices involving direct contact with the body of the deceased can also facilitate the spread of the virus. Infected individuals remain contagious as long as the virus is present in their blood.

Marburg Outbreak in Rwanda

1. First MVD outbreak in Rwanda:

On September 27, 2024, the Rwandan Ministry of Health confirmed an outbreak of Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) in Rwanda.

2. Swift and proactive response

Since the initial cases were identified, Rwanda has responded swiftly and proactively. It's important to note that MVD is not airborne and is transmitted through direct contact with blood, bodily fluids, or contaminated surfaces of infected individuals. While serious, the virus can be controlled through effective containment and hygiene measures.

3. Safety and business continuity

Rwanda's track record in managing public health challenges ensures a safe environment for both residents and visitors. The government remains committed to scientific, evidence-based responses, as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, normal business and daily activities continue as usual, with a strong emphasis on reinforcing personal hygiene practices.

There are currently no travel restrictions in place. All key tourist destinations, including Volcanoes National Park, Akagera National Park, Gishwati Mukura National Park, and Nyungwe National Park, are fully operational.

4. Tourism and hospitality sector measures

All hospitality and tourism establishments, including hotels, restaurants, and other stakeholders like tour operators and guides, are adhering to strict hygiene protocols. These measures include hand sanitizing stations, temperature checks, and enhanced cleaning procedures.

On October 12, the Ministry of Health introduced a Marburg Symptoms Questionnaire that all travelers are requested to fill within 24 hours of departure from Kigali.

Since October 16, any traveler traveling from Rwanda to the US will be redirected to travel through one of the three airports for a health screening; Chicago (ORD), New York (JFK) and Washington DC (IAD). According to passengers who went through the screening, they said that the process is quick and efficient. According to the CDC, people infected by the virus can start showing symptoms 2 to 21 days after their exposure.

5. Advice for visitors

Tourists visiting Rwanda are advised to remain vigilant and practice good personal hygiene. This includes avoiding close contact with individuals showing symptoms like high fever or severe headaches. Due to additional health screenings travelers can expect some delays at the airport.

7. Healthcare system preparedness

Rwanda's healthcare system is well-equipped to manage public health emergencies. Isolation and treatment facilities are in place to handle any potential cases of MVD, ensuring the safety of both residents and visitors.

Sources:

- CDC Website: About Marburg (click [here](#))
- WHO Fact Sheet: Marburg Virus Disease (click [here](#))
- Local contacts
- Rwanda Ministry of Health publications
- RDB statements
- Rwanda Biomedical Center (click [here](#))

Elevate Destinations Commitment to Safety

Elevate Destinations and our local partners take the health and safety of our clients and staff very seriously. We are fully committed to strictly adhering to all health protocols issued by the Rwandan government and the World Health Organization (WHO). Our operations will follow all recommended hygiene and safety measures, including sanitizing practices and temperature checks to ensure the well-being of all our clients and staff.

Any traveler who presents symptoms of MVD, such as high fever, severe headache, or diarrhea, will be immediately isolated and taken to a healthcare facility for testing and appropriate care.