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Marburg virus disease in Ethiopia

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

On 14 November 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a [Marburg disease \(MARD\)](#) outbreak in Jinka town, in the South Ethiopia Region of Ethiopia [1]. As of 20 November 2025, the Ethiopia's Ministry of Health reported a total of six confirmed cases, including three deaths [2]; two were health workers [3]. A total of 33 suspected cases are under investigation [2]. This is the first MARD outbreak reported in Ethiopia [1].

MARD can be a severe, often fatal haemorrhagic fever, which is very similar to Ebola virus disease [4, 5]. Marburg virus can spread to humans from animals (zoonotic infection). African fruit bats are the natural hosts (primary reservoir) of this virus. Monkeys, other non-human primates and antelopes can also be infected. Exposure to body tissues or fluids of infected animals is a risk factor for infection [4].

Marburg virus can also spread between people through direct contact (via broken skin or mucous membranes) with blood, organs, secretions or other bodily fluids of infected people. Surfaces and material like bedding and clothes contaminated with these fluids are also a risk. Sexual transmission of the virus can also occur [5].

Close contact with the body, blood or body fluids of people who have died of MARD during burial preparation is a known source of infection [4].

In the past MARD outbreaks and sporadic cases have been reported in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa (in a person who visited Zimbabwe) and Tanzania [4].

Recent testing (genetic analysis) of the MARD cases in Ethiopia indicate it is the same virus strain reported in previous outbreaks in other East African countries. WHO and their partner organisations are supporting Ethiopian authorities in their response to this outbreak. This includes community-wide screening, isolation of cases, treatment, contact tracing and public awareness campaigns [1].

Up-to date information on the outbreak and country-specific information can be found on our Ethiopia [Country Information pages](#) and [Outbreak Surveillance section](#)

Advice for travellers

Before you go

Check and follow 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. Remember to get appropriate [travel health insurance](#)

There is currently no approved (licensed) vaccine to protect against MARD, but several vaccines are being developed [4, 5].

While you are there

Make sure you keep informed with up-to-date, reliable information on specific MARD affected areas, as these can change rapidly.

Ensure you follow general measures to reduce your risk of illness and injury while in Ethiopia. This includes taking care with [food and water hygiene](#), using [effective mosquito-bite precautions](#) and taking the antimalarial medication you have been advised if you are travelling to a [malaria-risk area](#) of Ethiopia.

You can become infected with MARD if you have contact through broken skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth) with the blood, secretions or other bodily fluids of infected people and with surfaces or materials (bedding, clothes) contaminated with these fluids [4, 5].

Close contact with the body, blood or body fluids of someone who has died from MARD when helping prepare for their funeral or burial is a known infection risk [4].

If you are visiting affected areas in Ethiopia, 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 MARD, including contact with their blood and bodily fluids
- Avoid all contact with deceased people, including their blood and body fluids
- Avoid taking part 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 MARD

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 while you are away, speak to your travel 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 MARD, you should mention your dates and itinerary of travel and any potential exposure to the virus.

Other infectious diseases like malaria are present in Ethiopia. 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 Ethiopia or up to a year after you return to the United Kingdom (UK).

Advice for those working in affected areas

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

Organisations deploying staff in response to this outbreak must register with the [UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) returning workers scheme \(RWS\)](#) [6] and work according to [WHO infection prevention and control guidance for Ebola and Marburg disease](#)

If you are working with individuals suspected to be infected with MARD, 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 MARD. See the [UKHSA MARD 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 MARD is suspected, in accordance with NHS [National Infection Prevention and Control high consequence infectious disease](#) 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 UKHSA. Rapid transfer to a designated High Consequence Infectious Disease Treatment Centre will be arranged for confirmed MARD cases in the UK [6].

UKHSA has specialised laboratory facilities to provide a definitive MARD 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: Global high consequence infectious disease events](#)
- [World Health Organization: Marburg virus disease](#)
- [Viral haemorrhagic fevers](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa. Ethiopia confirms first outbreak of Marburg virus disease. 14 November 2025. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)
2. [Ministry of Health Ethiopia. Marburg Virus Disease Daily Update 20 November 2025. Social media post. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)
3. [UK Health Security Agency. Ebola and Marburg haemorrhagic fevers: outbreaks and case locations. 17 November 2025. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)
4. [UK Health Security Agency. Marburg virus disease: origins, reservoirs, transmission and guidelines. Last updated 17 November 2025. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)
5. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Factsheet for health professionals about Marburg virus disease. 10 October 2024. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)
6. [UK Health Security Agency. Ebola and Marburg: returning workers scheme \(RWS\). Last updated 17 November 2025.](#)

[\[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)

7. [World Health Organization. Infection prevention and control guideline for Ebola and Marburg disease. 11 August 2023. \[Accessed 21 November 2025\]](#)