# UK health officials probe Lassa fever case following recent travel from Nigeria



Health officials in the UK are actively seeking contacts of an individual who travelled to England from Nigeria while unwell with Lassa fever, a serious and potentially contagious illness. The diagnosis was confirmed after the individual returned to Nigeria following their stay in the UK at the end of February. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) was notified in accordance with the International Health Regulations.

In addressing concerns surrounding the case, the UKHSA reassured the public that "Lassa fever does not spread easily between people, and the overall risk to the UK population is very low." Currently, the agency is focused on identifying individuals who may have been in close contact with the affected person while they were in the UK to provide guidance on appropriate medical care and testing.

Dr Meera Chand, Deputy Director at the UK Health Security Agency, stated: "Our Health Protection Teams are working at pace to get in touch with people who were in contact with this individual while they were in England, to ensure they seek appropriate medical care and testing should they develop any symptoms."

Lassa fever, caused by the Lassa virus, is mainly transmitted through exposure to food or household items contaminated with the urine or faeces of infected rats, a common vector in much of West Africa, where the disease is endemic. The virus can also be transmitted between individuals through contact with infected bodily fluids, which can include blood and other secretions.

The symptoms of Lassa fever can range significantly in severity, beginning with mild symptoms such as fever, fatigue, and headache. In about 80% of cases, the infection is either mild or asymptomatic. Severe cases can lead to a variety of complications, including respiratory distress and bleeding. Statistically, the disease has a fatality rate of approximately 1% to 3% in cases diagnosed, though this rate is higher among hospitalised patients, particularly in pregnant women, where the mortality rate for unborn children can reach as high as 90%.

Historically, instances of Lassa fever in the UK have been exceedingly rare, with fewer than a dozen cases recorded since surveillance began. The last known case was reported in 2022 following a cluster of infections in Bedfordshire, where three members of a family returning from West Africa were affected, one of whom died.

As of now, health chiefs continue to emphasise that the general public's risk remains low, and the agency is taking steps to manage and monitor the situation closely.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/what-is-lassa-fever-ebola-found-uk-b2711042.html> - This article confirms the case of Lassa fever in the UK and explains that the virus does not spread easily between people, with the overall risk to the public being very low. It also details how the UK Health Security Agency is tracing contacts of the infected individual.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/bulletin/news/lassa-fever-case-uk-news-symptoms-b2711088.html> - This article provides information on the symptoms of Lassa fever, ranging from mild to severe, and emphasizes that the risk to the public is very low. It also mentions the efforts of the UK Health Security Agency to trace contacts.
* <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-and-a/detail/lassa-fever> - This World Health Organization Q&A page explains the transmission and symptoms of Lassa fever, aligning with the information provided about the disease being mainly transmitted through contact with infected rodents and having a low risk of human-to-human transmission.
* <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/lassa/index.html> - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide detailed information on Lassa fever, including its transmission, symptoms, and fatality rates, supporting the claims about the disease's severity and transmission methods.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lassa-fever> - This UK government guidance page offers information on Lassa fever, including its symptoms, transmission, and the measures taken by health authorities to manage cases in the UK, supporting the narrative about public health responses.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lassa-fever/> - The NHS provides information on Lassa fever, including its symptoms and how it is transmitted, which aligns with the article's description of the disease and its low risk to the general public.