# Deadly Mutant Strain of Mpox Emerges in DRC, Threatening Neighbouring Countries



A new strain of mpox, believed to be even more dangerous than previous versions, has emerged in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The mutant form, known as clade 1b, has a fatality rate of up to 10% and is linked to numerous miscarriages. Since it was first identified in February, the virus has spread rapidly within the country, with more than 7,800 cases and 384 deaths reported by the World Health Organization in 2024 alone.

Clade 1b differs significantly from the milder clade II strain that caused a global health concern in 2022. Unlike clade II, which primarily spread through sexual contact, the new strain can transmit through simple touch, increasing the risk of widespread infection. The virus is notably causing whole-body rashes, eye problems, and high fevers and is passing from mother to child, schools, and workplaces.

Incidence data suggest that the virus has likely crossed into neighboring countries like Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, though no cases have been confirmed outside the DRC yet. With frequent international flights from cities like Goma, there is a legitimate concern about the virus reaching Europe.

Experts emphasize the urgency of the situation, noting that the existing smallpox vaccine, although effective against previous mpox strains, might not work against clade 1b. There is also difficulty in diagnosing the new variant, leaving many possibly infected individuals undetected.

Global health organizations, including the WHO and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), are in discussions about securing vaccines and other preventive measures. However, substantial unknowns about the virus remain, complicating efforts to contain its spread.