

The disease. Marburg Virus Disease is caused by the Marburg virus, a rare but severe type of Viral Hemorrhagic Fever, which affects both humans and non-human primates such as monkeys and baboons.

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Marburg outbreak: Ministry monitoring 41 contacts

KWEEN/KAMPALA. Ministry of Health epidemiologists are monitoring 41 persons, including 21 health workers and 20 community members, suspected to have come into contact with first probable Marburg case in Kween District.

Dr Luke Nyakarahuka, an epidemiologist with the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI), told the *Daily Monitor* yesterday that the 41 persons will be monitored daily for 21 days until none of them presents symptoms of the disease.

"We have listed 41 contacts, out of which 21 are health workers and 20 family members, friends and relatives to the deceased," Dr Nyakarahuka said.

However, he said a man, who is a relative to the confirmed 50-year-old female, has been placed under isolation at a ward established at Kaproron Health Centre IV in Kween District.

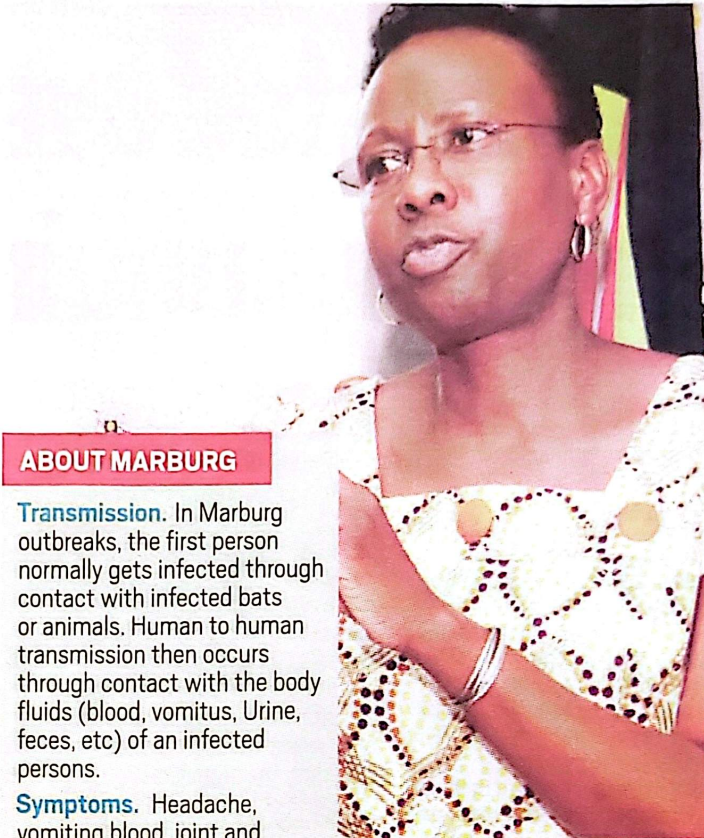
"We are working out a process of sending his blood samples to UVRI laboratories in Entebbe but he is currently under isolation," he added.

Dr Nyakarahuka, who is part of the Rapid Response Team dispatched by the Ministry of Health to the districts of Kween and Kapchorwa, said the burial of the case whose results had tested positive was supervised by health workers.

He also said a two-year-old baby died on Tuesday in Kaswama in Kiriki Sub-county after she had showed signs of the disease.

Confirmed

The minister of Health, Dr Jane Aceng yesterday, confirmed a Marburg outbreak in the eastern district of Kween after blood samples tested positive at UVRI.



ABOUT MARBURG

Transmission. In Marburg outbreaks, the first person normally gets infected through contact with infected bats or animals. Human to human transmission then occurs through contact with the body fluids (blood, vomitus, Urine, feces, etc) of an infected persons.

Symptoms. Headache, vomiting blood, joint and muscle pains, unexplained bleeding through the body openings including the eyes, nose, gums, ears, anus and the skin.

What to do. Report any suspected patient immediately to a nearby health facility and avoid direct contact with body fluids of a person presenting with bleeding tendencies or symptoms suggestive of Marburg virus disease.

Advised. The Minister of Health, Dr Jane Aceng, addresses journalists at the Uganda Media Centre yesterday.

PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

She said government had dispatched a rapid response team of epidemiologists to trace persons who might have had contact with the source of the virus in order to contain its further transmission.

"As of October 19, only one case had been confirmed. The confirmed case was a 50-year-old female from Chemuron Village, Moyok Parish,

Moyok Sub-county, Kween District in eastern Uganda," Dr Aceng said while addressing journalists at the Uganda Media Centre.

According to Dr Aceng, the patient passed away on October 13 at Kapchorwa Hospital after being referred from Kaproron Health Centre IV.

"Preliminary field investigations indicated that prior to her death; the deceased had nursed her 42-year-old brother, who had died on September 25, with similar signs and symptoms. She had also closely participated in the cultural preparation of the body for burial," Dr Aceng explained.

The patient had presented with signs and symptoms suggestive of a Viral Haemorrhagic Fever (VHF) before her death, Dr Aceng said.

"She had also closely participated in the cultural preparation of the body for burial. The deceased's brother was reported to be a hunter who carried out his activities where there are caves with heavy presence of bats. However, no samples were taken off his body prior to his death," she added.

Meanwhile, Dr Miriam Nanyunja, a disease prevention and control officer at World Health Organisation, indicated the country is at risk of several other Marburg outbreaks due to a high presence of fruit bats and other primates that act as reservoirs to the virus.

"A survey done in Uganda indicated that the caves and forests were inhabited by fruit bats that are seasonally infected with the Marburg virus," she said.

Dr Aceng asked the public to remain alert and observe the several precautions to control the spread of the Marburg virus.