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Uganda Fights Another Ebola Outbreak

This is the VOA Special English Health Report.

Uganda's latest outbreak of Ebola virus is the fourth in recent years. About two hundred people died in the biggest outbreak, in two thousand. Thirty-seven people died in the last outbreak in two thousand seven.

Ebola is a hemorrhagic fever -- it can lead to bleeding inside and outside the body. Symptoms of the disease include high fever, vomiting and sometimes diarrhea. Other signs include weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat.

Ebola spreads through contact with blood or other body fluids of infected people. The virus is often deadly. There is no cure, and no vaccine to prevent the disease.

On Monday, President Yoweri Museveni urged Ugandans to report all suspected cases of Ebola. He also urged people to limit their physical contact -- even shaking hands.

YOWERI MUSEVENI: "We discourage the shaking of hands because that can cause contact through sweat, which can cause problems. And when people are sick in hospitals, with symptoms which look like Ebola, they should be handled by medical workers wearing protective gear."

President Museveni also warned people to let medical workers bury suspected Ebola victims.

YOWERI MUSEVENI: "Please do not take on the job of burying him, or her. Call the medical workers to be the ones to do it because they are the ones who can do it safely."

Most of the cases in the latest outbreak have been reported in western Uganda. A World Health Organization official said the first cases in July were mistaken at first for cholera. But Denis Lwamafa from Uganda's Ministry of Health says Uganda has improved its ability to identify cases of Ebola.

DENIS LWAMAFA: "Uganda now is probably at the forefront, in terms of handling viral hemorrhagic fevers, on the continent of Africa. So this is now an indigenous local capacity of which we must take note. We've been able to elevate the level of proficiency in diagnosing even these highly infectious organisms here in Uganda, and I would like to report that the diagnosis of the Ebola virus was done here."

Mr. Lwamafa said that although the disease is also found in nearby countries, outbreaks are not always identified.

DENIS LWAMAFA: "In other countries, especially in some of the neighboring countries, many times Ebola goes unrecognized, and other times is goes unreported, because it has the capacity to burn itself out. In some of the neighboring states, Ebola comes and wipes out even whole villages, and after a certain time, because there is nobody else to infect, it dies out."

Ebola fever is named after a river near the first recognized outbreak. That was in nineteen seventy-six in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

And that's the VOA Special English Health Report. To read, listen and learn English with our stories, go to voaspecialenglish.com. I'm Jim Tedder.

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