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DOH MONITORING EBOLA, HANTAVIRUS OUTBREAKS

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HONOLULU — The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is actively monitoring an outbreak of Bundigbugyo virus, a strain of Ebola virus, that is occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

On May 16, the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared a public health emergency of international concern due to the outbreak. This declaration enables the WHO and international public health partners to surge specialized outbreak response resources to the affected countries. The risk of the outbreak to Hawai'i is currently very low. However, this is a good reminder to use common sense when traveling internationally to stay healthy.

“The recent hantavirus and Ebola outbreaks are reminders of the need to continue to invest in public health and to remain engaged globally,” said Governor Josh Green.

“Infectious pathogens don’t recognize borders. The risk to Hawai’i from these outbreaks is very low, but we continue to be vigilant.”

What is Bundigbugyo virus?

Bundigbugyo virus (BDBV) is a strain of the Ebola virus group first identified during an outbreak in the Bundigbugyo District of Uganda in 2007. Like other Ebola viruses, BDBV causes a severe illness called Bundigbugyo Virus Disease (BVD). BVD symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, multi-organ damage and in some cases, hemorrhage or bleeding. The WHO reports BVD is fatal in 30 to 50% of cases. Unlike the Ebola Zaire virus strain, there is currently no licensed vaccine or therapeutic medication for BDBV infection. BDBV is believed to occur naturally in fruit bats that live in Central Africa, with occasional spillover to the human population. BDBV can spread from person to person through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs, or other bodily fluids of infected individuals or contaminated surfaces.

Why is the risk for Hawai’i considered very low?

Human infections of Ebola viruses have rarely occurred outside endemic locations in Africa. Hawai’i does not have BDBV naturally occurring in bats or animals. There are also no direct air travel connections between the outbreak area and Hawai’i. National and international public health authorities are placing additional traveler screening measures in place in outbreak-affected areas to reduce the likelihood of traveler spread. BDBV transmission between people requires direct contact with body fluids and does not spread through the air by cough like measles or flu. Outbreaks typically occur in locations with low infection controls standards and resources.

What do I need to know if the risk is very low?

First, know that even though the WHO has declared a public health event of international concern, this is not a pandemic and nothing needs to change in our everyday lives due to this outbreak overseas.

Second, this outbreak also reminds us of the importance of being an informed and proactive international traveler to stay healthy. The DOH recommends Hawai’i residents routinely consult with their healthcare provider well in advance of planned international travel to assess potential health risks and discuss the most appropriate disease prevention measures. The DOH encourages all international travelers to review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Travelers’ Health website](#) and review any travel health notices for their destination(s). Travel to international locations with an ongoing outbreak of a severe disease may require additional monitoring and activity restrictions upon return home, as recommended by the CDC and the DOH.

What is Hawai'i DOH doing to monitor the situation?

The DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division (DOCD) and Office of Public Health Preparedness (OPHP) work every day to monitor new and emerging public health risks around the globe to protect our community's health here at home. The DOH is regularly connected with the CDC and the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network for situation updates. BDBV outbreaks can go on for months. The DOH will notify the public if anything changes in the future for our risk assessment here at home.

What about the hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship?

The DOH also continues to closely monitor an outbreak of Andes virus, a strain of hantavirus, among passengers and crew of the cruise ship MV Hondius. The CDC has confirmed that no Hawai'i residents were on the cruise ship. The DOH remains in regular contact with the CDC investigation team, continues to closely monitor developments, and will provide an update should the situation change.

Andes virus, a type of hantavirus endemic in South America, is the only hantavirus known to spread from person to person, typically through close or prolonged contact in confined settings. Several other New World hantaviruses are endemic to the United States and are not transmissible from person to person. Cases of infections caused by these other hantaviruses, although relatively rare, are seasonal and typically increase in the continental U.S. during the spring and summer as people come into contact with infected rodents.

For more information:

[Ebola disease caused by Bundibugyo virus, Democratic Republic of the Congo & Uganda](#)

[Travelers' Health | CDC](#)

[Ebola Disease Basics | Ebola | CDC](#)

[Andes Virus Outbreak on a Cruise Ship: Current Situation | Hantavirus | CDC](#)

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