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INCREASING IMPORTED CASES OF MPOX CLADE 1, WARN EUROPEAN OFFICIALS

Following Sweden's report of the first new *Mpox* clade 1 case outside of Africa, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has warned of the potential for increased imported *Mpox* clade 1 infections, urging countries to prepare.

In its statement and risk assessment, the ECDC recommended that countries with close travel ties to Africa issue travel advisories for those visiting or returning from **affected countries**. The risk is particularly high for individuals in close contact within impacted communities and moderate for those with close contacts with Europeans suspected or confirmed to have *Mpox* clade 1. For the general public, the overall risk of clade 1 infection is considered low.

Africa's *Mpox* situation is complex, with various countries battling different virus strains. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains the critical hotspot, where a new clade 1 virus emerged in 2023 and has been spreading locally. Other African nations, such as South Africa, are contending with the global clade 2 virus.

Infections caused by clade 1 viruses in endemic African regions were previously mainly zoonotic, with **limited human-to-human transmission**. However, the DRC outbreak has marked the first sexual transmission of clade 1 *Mpox* in the region. Health officials have reported community spread through sex workers and

household contacts, as well as some transmission via respiratory droplets.

Another **worrying** aspect is the spread of the virus to neighboring countries where *Mpox* has not been previously reported.

Meanwhile, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued guidelines regarding clade 1 *Mpox*, noting that it is more virulent and categorizing it as a high-consequence infectious disease. The agency urged healthcare providers to be vigilant, especially in sexually transmitted cases, and to consider clade 1 infection in patients with recent travel history to the DRC or other affected areas, or those who are contacts of confirmed clade 1 cases within 21 days of symptom onset.

On vaccination, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) strongly supports the World Health Organization's (WHO) call to donors for a coordinated response to the *Mpox* outbreak in Africa, emphasizing that **vaccination** is key to curbing future spread.

Africa CDC estimates that at least **10 million vaccine doses** are needed to slow the virus's spread, but there is currently a shortage in the region.

Accelerating vaccination efforts is crucial to protecting at-risk populations and preventing severe infections.

Adapted after Lisa Schnirring, 16 august 2024

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