



**Lassa fever : First Death in  
UK confirmed**



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*A hospital patient in **Bedfordshire** has died from a confirmed case of Lassa fever – **the third case** to be identified in the UK in the past few days.*

*All three cases of the potentially fatal disease are understood to be linked to **recent travel to West Africa.***





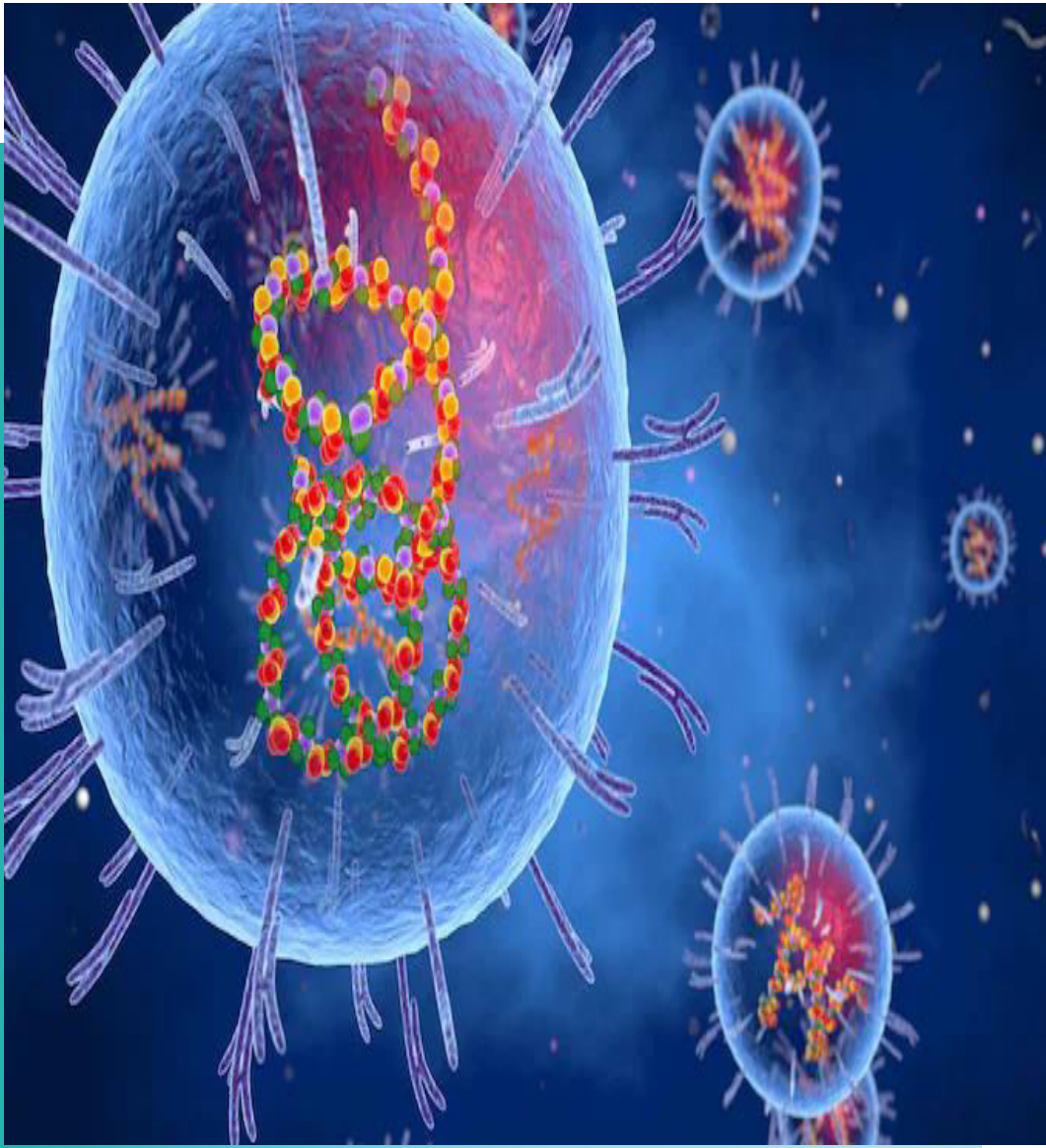
News > Health

# Lassa fever: Symptoms of Ebola-like virus as first UK death confirmed

Three cases of acute viral haemorrhagic illness reported in UK

**Tom Batchelor** • 15 hours ago • [2](#) Comments





- The Lassa virus is named after a **town in Nigeria** where the first cases were discovered.
- The death rate associated with this disease is low, at around one per cent. But the death rate is higher for certain individuals, such as pregnant women in their third trimester.

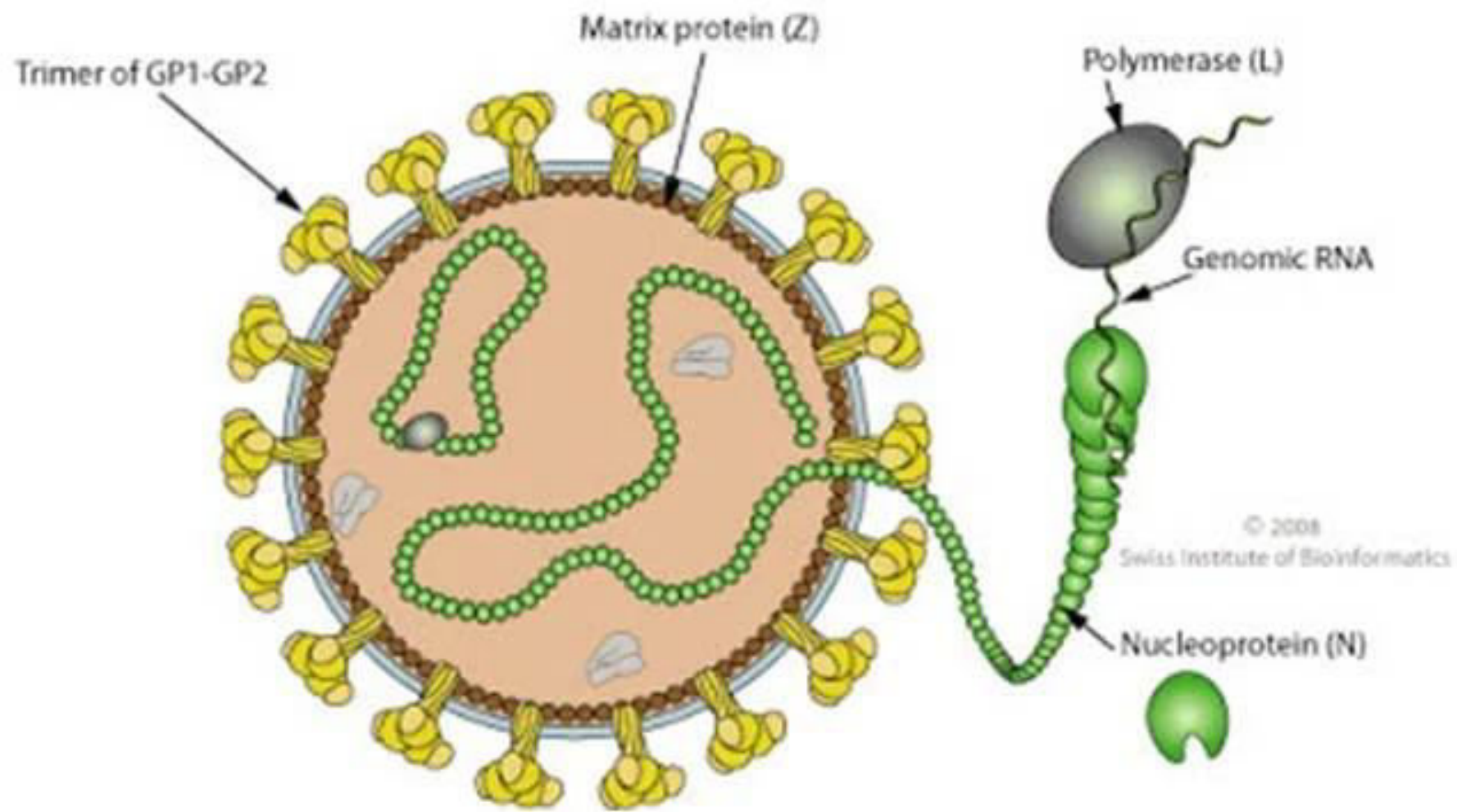


- Lassa fever is among a US list of 'category A' diseases, deemed to have the potential for major public health impact, alongside anthrax and botulism.
- According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, about 80 per cent of the cases are asymptomatic and therefore remain undiagnosed.
- Some patients may need to be hospitalised and develop severe multi-system disease. Fifteen per cent of the hospitalised patients may die.

# What is Lassa Fever?

- ✓ *Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness, belonging to the virus family Arenaviridae, that lasts between two and 21 days, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).*
- ✓ *The virus, for which there is no approved vaccine, is known to be endemic in Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.*
- ✓ *But it also probably exists in other West African countries as well.*







# LASSA FEVER



## QUICK FACTS

### SYMPTOMS

The signs and symptoms of Lassa fever mimics the symptoms of the following illnesses; **SEVERE MALARIA, TYPHOID FEVER, YELLOW FEVER** and other **VIRAL HEAMORRHAGIC FEVER**



High Fever



Persistent Vomiting



Stomach Ache



Severe Headache



Tiredness



Rashes



Diarrhoea



# Transmission

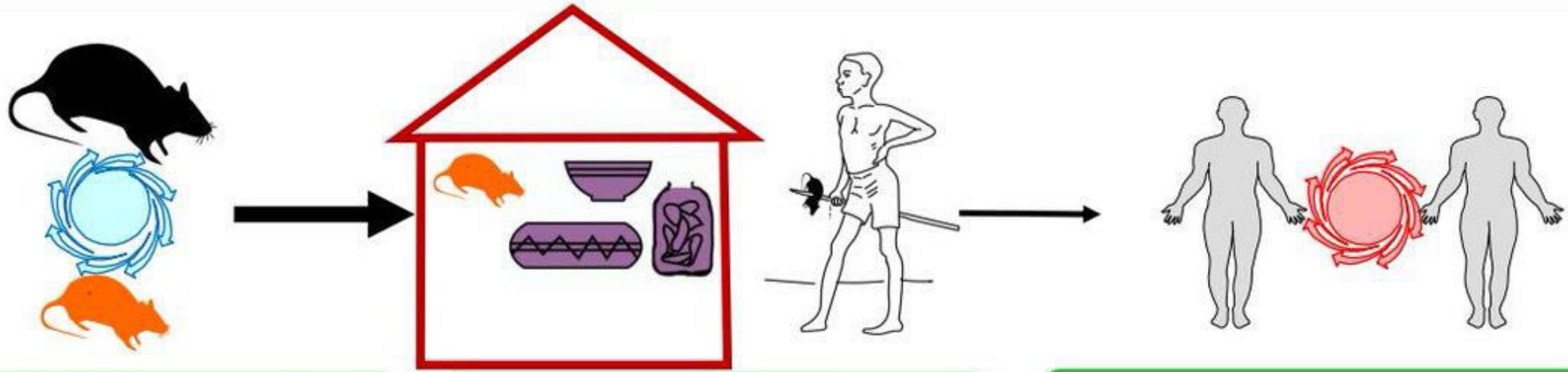
- *Humans can contract Lassa fever from eating food that has been tainted by the urine or faeces of rodents.*

- The virus, like Ebola, can also be spread through contact with the body fluids of a sick person, but it does not spread easily between humans.
- According to the WHO, there is no epidemiological evidence supporting airborne spread from person to person.





# Lassa fever Transmission



## Reservoir *Mastomys* rats

- The virus maintains itself in *Mastomys* rat population
- Virus is present in urine and feces of infected rats

## Primary human infections

80 to 90 % of humans are infected through:

- Food or household items contaminated by infected rats' urine and faeces.
- Direct contact while handling *Mastomys* rats (food source)

## Secondary human infections

- Secondary human-to-human transmission occurs through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other body fluids of infected persons.



# How deadly is Lassa fever?

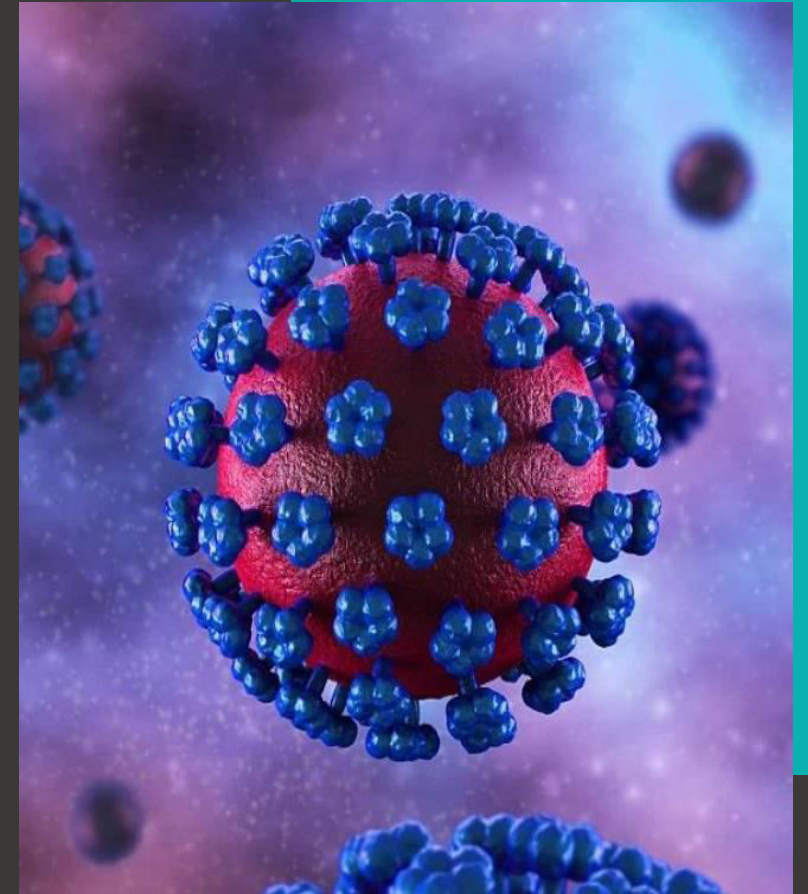


- Most people with Lassa fever will make a full recovery although severe illness can occur.
- The overall case-fatality rate is 1%, according to the WHO.
- But the observed case-fatality rate among patients who are admitted to hospital with severe cases of Lassa fever is 15%.
- Early supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment improves survival chances.



# How many cases have there been in the UK?

- ✓ *The virus was first formally identified in Nigeria in 1969 and no cases were reported in the UK until the 1980s.*
- ✓ *Since then, there have been 11 confirmed cases in total, including the three cases identified in the last few days.*



- *These cases are the first to have been confirmed in the UK since 2009.*
- *In November 2019, three British nationals were brought back to the UK from Sierra Leone for medical assessment after coming into close contact with two people diagnosed with Lassa fever.*
- *However, no Lassa fever cases were ultimately confirmed.*





# How many deaths have there been in the UK?



- Four people have now died from the virus in the UK since 2000, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) told PA.
- One died in 2000, two died in 2009 and the fourth death was confirmed on Friday.

# **LASSA FEVER**

## **Prevention Tips**

**1** **Avoid Contact**  
between rats and  
human beings



**2** **Block all**  
rat hideouts



**3** **Store**  
**foodstuffs**  
in rodent proof  
containers



**4** **Cook**  
all foods  
thoroughly



**5** **Always wash**  
hands thoroughly after  
contact with a  
sick person



Question:

Lassa and Ebola are emergent viruses in W. Africa. What is their origin?

- a) Humans
- b) Primates
- c) Fruit bats
- d) Pigs



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