

[Home](#) > [Public health](#)

News story

Prime Minister calls for 'wake-up to the threat from disease outbreak'

David Cameron will outline how the UK will step up its efforts to combat the outbreak and spread of deadly viruses.

From:

[Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street \(/government/organisations/prime-ministers-office-10-downing-street\)](#) and [The Rt Hon David Cameron \(/government/people/david-cameron\)](#)

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How the UK will increase efforts to combat outbreak and spread of deadly viruses

- UK sets out new plan to fight global health pandemics
- PM to tell G7 that the world must be far better prepared for the next Ebola-type virus
- More research and development, greater co-operation and a rapid response unit at centre of the UK strategy

The Prime Minister, David Cameron, will use the [G7 \(https://www.g7germany.de/Webs/G7/EN/Home_en/home_node.html\)](https://www.g7germany.de/Webs/G7/EN/Home_en/home_node.html) summit in Germany to outline how the UK will step up its efforts to combat the outbreak and spread of deadly viruses with a new plan that will include more research and development and an improvement in how international health agencies respond on the ground.

In a stark warning to other G7 leaders the Prime Minister will say that the world must be far better prepared for future health pandemics that could be more aggressive and harder to contain than the recent Ebola outbreak.

More than 27,000 cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) have now been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, with over 11,130 reported deaths, marking it as one of the worst pandemics in modern times.

Find out more about the [UK government's response to Ebola \(https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ebola-virus-government-response\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ebola-virus-government-response)

While the number of new cases has fallen drastically, experts have warned that lessons must be learnt from what happened. A more virulent disease in future – transmitted by coughing, like the flu or measles for example – would have a much more devastating impact if a better approach is not put in place.

Speaking ahead of the G7, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, said:

- “ The recent Ebola outbreak was a shocking reminder of the threat we all face from a disease outbreak.
- “ Despite the high number of deaths and devastation to the region, we got on the right side of it this time thanks to the tireless efforts of local and international health workers.
- “ But the reality is that we will face an outbreak like Ebola again and that virus could be more aggressive and more difficult to contain. It is time to wake up to that threat and I will be raising this issue at the G7.
- “ As a world we must be far better prepared with better research, more drug development and a faster and more comprehensive approach to how we fight these things when they hit.

“ The UK will lead the way but we need a truly global response if we are to face down this threat.”

The UK plan includes:

Breakthrough drug development

The UK's big players in drug development and research – including leading pharmaceutical companies, research centres, universities and disease experts – will come together to focus on the most serious global health threats. The UK Vaccines Research and Development Network will bring together the best expertise across the country, with £20 million invested from the outset to focus on the most threatening diseases including Ebola, Lassa, Marburg and Crimean-Congo Fever, with additional investment from the private and research sector.

More transparency, greater co-operation

Given the seriousness of the threat, the UK will be the first country in the world to require clinical trials and disease control operations to be fully transparent. From now on any UK-funded research, data or operation will be made openly available and the UK will look to develop an international agreement – via the G7 – that would see the publication of results of all clinical trials of vaccines for relevant diseases. Ebola showed us that when data on disease outbreaks is not shared quickly, the disease can get out of control. The UK's Chief Medical Officer will now work with the World Health Organisation to develop a new, more advanced system to share data on a disease with health agencies and doctors and nurses on the frontline.

Rapid reaction unit

The UK will establish a new group of 6 to 10 expert staff – mainly epidemiologists, infection control specialists and infection control doctors – who will be on permanent standby, ready to deploy to help countries respond to disease outbreaks. When deployed, the team will act as 'disease detectives', to understand what the disease is; how it is spreading; how fast it is spreading; and what response is required. A 'reservist force', including hundreds of doctors, nurses and public health experts, will be ready for call-up if the outbreak is not contained at an early stage.

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