

Ebola evolved during latest outbreak to become deadlier to humans

What made the recent Ebola outbreak in west Africa so virulent? The virus that seeped across borders and killed more than 11,000 people in the region had at least one genetic mutation that better equipped it to breach human cells, new research suggests. The startling discovery provides the first evidence that genetic changes likely sped up transmission—and may have made the terrifying disease even more deadly for humans.

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In one study led by 16 researchers at the University of Massachusetts, Broad Institute and elsewhere, genomic analyses pinpointed parts of the Ebola virus that changed during the west African outbreak...Lab tests confirmed the mutated virus could better infiltrate the cells of humans and other primates.

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Along with faster transmission rates, the mutation was also associated with higher death tolls. People infected with mutated Ebola virus that dominated the recent epidemic appeared to be twice as likely to die as those infected earlier in the same outbreak with a strain of virus that did not have that specific mutation, the researchers found.

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Ebola may have developed other important mutations that have not yet been uncovered, notes [Jonathan Ball, a molecular virologist at the University of Nottingham].

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Ebola's West African Rampage Was Likely Bolstered by a Mutation](#)