

Cholera outbreak claims four lives in Free State, death toll reaches 47

On Wednesday, 5 July, the Health Department confirmed a distressing update regarding the cholera situation in the Free State. Tragically, four more lives have been claimed by the disease, bringing the total death toll to 47.



Source: [Pexels](#)

While the department has recorded new deaths since the last reporting cycle, it said it has noted a significant decline in the number of both suspected and confirmed cholera cases around the country in the past few weeks.

A confirmed case is defined as a laboratory-confirmed presence of cholera bacteria called *Vibrio cholerae* in any patient with diarrhoea.

“A suspected case of cholera is a person of any age with or dying from acute watery diarrhoea with or without vomiting. In areas where a cholera outbreak has been declared, any person presenting with or dying from acute watery diarrhoea meets the criteria of a suspected case,” the department explained.

According to data, only one confirmed positive cholera case was recorded out of 28 new suspected infections in the past 10 days.

“This doesn’t mean the transmission of cholera is over, and members of the public are urged to remain vigilant and exercise

personal hygiene at all times, especially when preparing and serving food during mass gatherings,” a Department of Health statement read.

Data shows that the country has recorded a total cumulative number of 1,073 suspected cases of cholera in five provinces , of which 198 of them were laboratory-confirmed between 1 February and 4 July 2023.

Distribution of infections: Gauteng takes the lead

Gauteng is leading with 176 infections mostly from Hammanskraal in Tshwane, while 11 were recorded in Free State, six in the North West, four in Limpopo and one in Mpumalanga.

In addition, most infections were diagnosed in the public sector, while 6% were detected at private laboratories.



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8 Jun 2023



In terms of gender distribution, females accounted for 52%, which translates into 102 out of 198 confirmed cases.

Meanwhile, the age group between 41 to 50 accounted for 23% (46 out of 198) cases, followed by 31 to 40 years at 17% (33 out of 198), while 60 years and above is sitting at 13% (26 out of 198).

The department urges all those involved in running initiation schools to work closely with healthcare workers to ensure that the cultural practice takes place in compliance with relevant health and safety regulations.

The department has since stressed the importance of personal hygiene and the provision of clean water from reliable sources to prevent the outbreak and transmission of waterborne diseases like cholera.

Meanwhile, efforts and interventions to prevent new infections mainly through health education and targeted case-finding activities continue.

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