

WHO aims to erase hazard linked to chronic illness

UN agency calls for all countries to rid foods of trans fat

NEW YORK, May 14, (AP): The World Health Organization is calling on all nations to rid foods of artificial trans fats in the next five years.

The United Nations agency has in the past pushed to exterminate infectious diseases, but now it's aiming to erase a hazard linked to chronic illness.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was expected to issue the call to action at a news conference in Geneva on Monday.

Officials think it can be done in five years because the work is well underway in many countries. Denmark did it 15 years ago, and since then the United States and more than 40 other higher-income countries have been working on getting the heart-clogging additives out of their food supplies.

The WHO is pushing middle- and lower-income countries to pick up the fight, said Dr. Francesco Branca, director of the WHO's Department of Nutrition for Health and Development.

Artificial trans fats are unhealthy substances that are created when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil to make it solid, like in the creation of margarine or shortening. Health experts say they can be replaced with canola oil or other products.

There are also naturally occurring trans fats in some meats and dairy products. The WHO recommends that no more than 1 percent of a person's calories come from trans fats.

"Trans fats are a harmful compound that can be removed easily without major cost and without any impact on the quality of the foods," Branca said.

Countries will likely have to use regulation or legislation to get food makers to make the switch, experts said.

Dr. Tom Frieden, a former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who worked with WHO officials on the call to action,

Specialists deployed to tackle epidemic

WHO reports new Ebola case in DR Congo, vaccine this week

KINSHASA, May 14, (Agencies): The head of the World Health Organization said Sunday there has been another reported case of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo and that an experimental vaccine to fight the disease is expected to become available in the country this week.

Doctor Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on a two-visit to DR Congo, said the suspected new case was in Bikoro, at the centre of the latest Ebola outbreak in the country's northwest, where so far 19 people have died.

It brings to 39 the number of reported cases, including two confirmed, according to the WHO tally.

The WHO is planning to begin a vaccination campaign in the area, near the border with the Republic of Congo, using an available stockpile of an experimental vaccine.

"The vaccines are going to arrive on Wednesday or Thursday. We have enough of them," said Tedros, without specifying the number of doses.

After meeting with DR Congo President Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa, the WHO chief praised "the

government's very strong leadership" in responding to the health crisis and its "good coordination" with partners such as UNICEF and Doctors without Borders (MSF).

On Friday the UN health agency had announced that it was preparing for all scenarios, including the "worst case scenario", in the latest Ebola outbreak in DR Congo.

Tedros said he hoped for a "better result" in this ninth Ebola outbreak in the vast central African country since 1976, when the deadly viral disease was first identified by a Belgian-led team.

Ebola is one of the world's most notorious diseases, being both highly infectious and extremely lethal.

The worst-ever Ebola outbreak started in December 2013 in southern Guinea before spreading to two neighbouring west African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone, killing more than 11,300 people out of nearly 29,000 registered cases.

The Democratic Republic of Congo and UN agencies began deploying emergency teams of specialists over the weekend to

try to prevent the spread of an Ebola epidemic.

The World Health Organisation obtained 4,000 doses of an experimental Ebola vaccine and was preparing for deployment in Congo, its Africa director, Matshidiso Moeti, told Reuters by telephone on Sunday.

Only two cases have so far been confirmed in a laboratory.

The latest suspected case was reported on Friday in the northwestern province of Equateur, which Health Minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga visited on Saturday with officials from the WHO and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

President Joseph Kabila also met WHO Director-General Ghebreyesus in Kinshasa on Sunday.

Moeti said 362 contacts had been traced of those who had fallen sick - a necessary precursor to deploying the vaccines. She added that two of those contacts had got to the provincial capital, Mbandaka. The biggest worry since the epidemic was identified has been that it could spread there.

"We're concerned because this is a city of 1 million people," she

said.

Congo first reported the outbreak, centred on the village of Ikoko Impenge, near the town of Bikoro, on Tuesday, with 32 suspected, probable or confirmed cases of the disease, including 18 deaths since April 4. Some deaths occurring as early as January have not yet been linked to the epidemic.

"It is evident that two or three months earlier, some cases of hemorrhagic fever and some deaths occurred," Moeti said. "Work is under way to determine the beginning of this epidemic."

Officials are racing to prevent the virus from spreading out of control, as happened in West Africa from 2014 to 2016, when Ebola killed more than 11,300 people in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The WHO was criticised for bungling its response to that epidemic, and so has moved quickly.

Congo suffered eight previous Ebola epidemics. But owing to remote geography and poor transport links, they tended to fizzle out rather than spread to become a national crisis.

called its move unprecedented.

"The world is now setting its sights on today's leading killers - particularly heart disease, which kills more people than any other cause in almost every country," said Frieden, who is president of a New-York-based philanthropy-funded project called Resolve to Save Lives.

The first trans fatty food to hit the US market was Crisco shortening, which went on sale in 1911. Trans fatty foods became increasingly popular beginning in the 1950s, partly because experts at the time thought they were healthier than cooking with butter or lard.

Food makers liked artificial trans

fats because they prolong product shelf life and enhance flavor. They used them in such fare as doughnuts, cookies and deep-fried foods.

But studies gradually revealed that trans fats wreck cholesterol levels in the blood and drive up the risk of heart disease. Health advocates say trans fats are the most harmful fat in

the food supply, and say they play a big role in more than 500,000 deaths around the world each year.

In the US, New York City in 2006 banned restaurants from serving food with trans fats. The same year the FDA required manufacturers to list trans fat content information on food labels.

Many manufacturers cut back, and

studies showed trans fat levels in the blood of middle-aged US adults fell by nearly 60 percent by the end of the decade.

In 2015, the FDA took steps to finish the job of eliminating trans fats, calling for manufacturers to stop selling trans fatty foods by June 18, 2018 - a deadline that arrives next month. FDA officials have not said how much progress has been made or how they will enforce their rule against food makers that don't comply.

"The removal of trans fats from the food supply as an additive counts as one of the major public health victories of the last decade," said Laura MacCleery, policy director for the Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group, Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Also:
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, Ohio: A 113-year-old woman living in suburban Cleveland is believed to be the oldest person in the United States after the death of a 114-year-old Pennsylvania woman.

Cleveland.com reports the 88-year-old daughter of **Lessie Brown** says her mother remarked, "that's good" when told Friday she had become the country's oldest person.

Daughter **Verline Wilson** says Brown spends much of her days sleeping.

Brown was born in 1904 in **Atlanta** and moved to Cleveland when she was 18. She married and had five children, three of whom are still living. The Cleveland Heights resident has more than 50 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Family members have attributed Brown's long life to her eating a yam every day until she was 110.

Delphine Gibson was 114 when she died Wednesday in **Huntingdon**, Pennsylvania.

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