

VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC FEVERS EXTENDED MESSAGE

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR THE FIRST HOURS

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What is happening?

- This is an urgent health message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Please pay careful attention to this message to protect your health and that of others.
- Public health officials believe that a virus that causes a viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF) may have been intentionally released the *xxx area*. There are *xxx* suspected cases in *xxx area*.
- Local, state, and federal officials, including public health and law enforcement, are working together. Updated announcements will be made as soon as officials know more.
- If you have fever and live in the *xxx area*, to be on the safe side, stay away from others and call your local public health department at *xxx-xxx-xxxx* or your doctor immediately.
- Some viruses that cause VHF can spread from one person to another.
- VHF is usually spread by close contact with an infected person. Some types are spread by infected animals. A weaponized version of the virus may be intentionally spread through air. Listen for announcements from public health officials about how the infection appears to be spreading.
- HHS is working hard to respond to this outbreak. By staying informed and following instructions from health officials, you can protect yourself, your family, and the community against this public health threat.
- For more information about VHFs, visit the HHS Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov>, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) VHF page at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/virlfvr/virlfvr.htm>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO for the latest updates.
- This message contains additional information that can help protect your health and the health of others.

What is VHF and can it spread from person to person?

- VHF is a serious illness caused by a virus. Many different viruses can cause VHF. Examples of viruses that cause VHF include Ebola, Marburg, and Lassa viruses.
- Some of the viruses that cause VHF can spread from person to person through direct contact with blood or other body fluids (e.g., saliva or urine). Some can also be spread by contaminated objects, such as the bedding of a sick person.
- Some forms of VHF occur naturally throughout the world. These can be passed to people through infected animals, such as livestock, rodents, or insects.
- Every year, several cases of VHF occur outside the United States. However, natural cases do not occur in the United States unless brought in by an infected traveler or released on purpose.

What are the symptoms of VHF?

- Depending on the type of virus, symptoms of VHF may differ. However, they can cause fever, headache, sore throat, muscle aches, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and, in the most severe cases, bleeding, shock, and multi-organ failure.
- Although many of the initial symptoms are similar to the flu or other viral illnesses, VHF can be far more serious. Take extra precautions because of the reports of VHF in the xxx area.

How are VHF treated?

- A VHF can be a life-threatening illness. However, medical treatment can control symptoms and save lives.
- Treatment may include supportive care, such as balancing the patient's fluids and electrolytes and maintaining their oxygen status and blood pressure. Secondary bacterial infections may be treated with antibiotics.
- For many VHF, specific treatments against the viruses that cause them do not exist.

What to do if you have symptoms of VHF

- If you become ill with fever or develop other symptoms, such as chills, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, or rash, visit a health-care provider **immediately**. *Tell the provider about your symptoms before going to the office or emergency room so arrangements can be made to prevent transmission to others in the healthcare setting.*
- Until you can get medical help and what illness you have can be, stay away from others to avoid spreading the disease to them.
- People with symptoms of a possible VHF, including fever, should stay home and avoid contact with other household members until they are evaluated by a healthcare provider
- In addition, take these steps:
 1. Keep your hands clean by washing them with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand gel.
 2. Be prepared for possible nausea and vomiting. Have a large heavy duty plastic bag or a basin nearby.
 3. Avoid taking any aspirin or ibuprofen (including brand name drugs like Motrin, Advil, Nuprin, etc.). You can use acetaminophen according to the label instructions.

What to do if you were at or near xxx area and think you might have been exposed to a VHF

- Even if you don't feel sick, call your doctor or local public health department at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Explain that you do ***not*** have any symptoms, but you believe you may have had contact with a VHF virus.
- Get a thermometer and check your temperature twice a day. Report any temperature over 101°F to your doctor or local public health department.
- Until health authorities can determine whether you have had contact with a VHF or someone infected with a VHF, stay away from other people as much as possible to stop the spread of the disease.
- Health authorities will want to first treat those people who are sick or who have been in direct contact with a sick person.

What to do if you are concerned about getting a VHF

- It is natural to be concerned or afraid at a time like this.
- If you do not have any symptoms, were not near xxx area, and have not been near someone who is sick with a VHF, you most likely have ***not*** been exposed to the virus.
- People who are concerned about VHFs will be evaluated and treated if needed.
- If a person in your house becomes sick with a VHF-like illness, have them stay in a bedroom alone until they can be evaluated by a healthcare provider or public health worker.
- If a VHF virus was released into the air, you will not be able to see or smell the virus.
- Stay informed and follow the instructions of public health officials about what areas or activities to avoid and other information to keep you safe.
- Stay informed by turning to the radio, television, or Internet news for updated health and safety announcements.

What is being done and how to get more information.

- Federal, state, and local health officials are working together to identify and stop the spread of this disease. They are identifying and treating people who have symptoms or may have had contact with a virus causing a VHF. They are also taking actions to protect others from being exposed.
- HHS is working hard to respond to this outbreak. By staying informed and following instructions from health officials, you can protect yourself, your family, and the community against this public health threat.
- Public health officials will share more information about the suspected outbreak as soon as more is known.
- Go to [insert local media information here] to hear the latest information from local officials.
- For more information about VHFs, visit the HHS Website at <http://www.hhs.gov>, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) VHF page at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/vir/fvr/vir/fvr.htm>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO for the latest updates