

Ebola Information

What are the Symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola, but the average is 8 to 10 days, and include:

- Fever (greater than 38.6°C or 101.5°F)
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

How is Ebola transmitted?

When an infection does occur in humans, the virus can be spread in several ways to others. Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with:

- Blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, feces, vomit, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola.
- Objects (like needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus.
- Objects that have been contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola.

Ebola is not spread through the air or by water, or in general, food. Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus.

How is Ebola diagnosed?

Diagnosing Ebola in a person who has been infected for only a few days is difficult, because the early symptoms, such as fever, are nonspecific to Ebola infection and are seen often in patients with more commonly occurring diseases.

However, if a person has the early symptoms of Ebola and has had contact with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola, contact with objects that have been contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola, or contact with infected animals, they should be isolated and public health professionals notified. Samples from the patient can then be collected and tested in specialized laboratories to confirm infection.

What is my risk of contracting Ebola?

Healthcare providers caring for Ebola patients and the family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with the blood or body fluids of sick patients. If you have traveled to an area with an Ebola outbreak or had close contact with a person who is sick with Ebola, then monitor your temperature and health signs and symptoms of Ebola for 21 days. In the event that you seek medical attention, report your exposure to Ebola before you enter the doctor's office or emergency room.

How can transmission of Ebola be prevented?

There is no FDA-approved vaccine available for Ebola. In general, you should practice careful hygiene, particularly by using good hand washing practices. If you travel to or suspect that you might have been exposed to the virus make sure to do the following:

- Practice careful hygiene. Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Do not touch the blood or body fluids (such as urine, feces, saliva, vomit, sweat, and semen) of someone you suspect is sick.
- Do not handle items that may have had contact with the blood or body fluids of an individual who you suspect is sick.
- Do not touch the body of someone who has died of Ebola.
- Seek medical attention urgently if you have symptoms and express your exposure concerns to the health care professional.

How is Ebola treated?

No specific vaccine or medicine (e.g., antiviral drug) has been proven to be effective against Ebola. Symptoms of Ebola are treated as they appear. The following basic interventions, when used early, can significantly improve the chances of survival:

- Providing intravenous fluids (IV) and balancing electrolytes (body salts)
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
- Treating other infections if they occur.

Some experimental treatments developed for Ebola have been tested and proven effective in animals, but have not yet been tested in randomized trials in humans.

The content contained in this document was adapted from information available on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website. To learn more about Ebola, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola>

For the most up-to-date FOH information, visit <http://www.foh.hhs.gov/nycu/ebola.html>

