



Ebola Virus Disease

What is Ebola?

Ebola virus disease (Ebola) is a deadly disease caused by infection with one of the six Ebola viruses. Ebola can cause disease in humans, nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees) and bats.

How is it spread?

A person infected with Ebola virus is not contagious until symptoms appear.

Ebola is spread through direct contact (like touching) (through broken skin or unprotected mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth) with

- blood or body fluids (feces, saliva, sweat, urine, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola,
- objects (like clothes, bedding, needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus,
- infected fruit bats or primates (apes and monkeys),
- semen from a man who has recovered from Ebola(through oral, vaginal or anal sex)
- Blood or body fluids of infected fruit bats or nonhuman primates such as apes and monkeys
- In certain parts of the world, Ebola virus may spread through the handling and consumption of bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food).

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms may appear from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the virus, but the average is 8 to 10 days.

Signs and symptoms of Ebola include:

- fever

- severe headache
- fatigue
- muscle pain
- weakness
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- stomach pain
- unexplained bleeding or bruising

What should happen if a person is suspected of having Ebola?

If a person has symptoms of Ebola and there is reason to believe that Ebola should be considered:

- The patient should be transferred to the hospital using isolation precautions to avoid contact with blood or body fluids.
- The Emergency Department should be notified **prior to transfer**.
- In the hospital, strict isolation will continue.
- The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU) at the Ministry of Health must be notified.

What type of treatment and care should be given?

Standard treatment for Ebola is still limited to supportive care and to help relieve symptoms.

Who are at risk for exposure to Ebola Virus?

Healthcare providers, family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with infected blood and body fluids. During outbreaks of Ebola, the disease can spread quickly within healthcare settings.

The most recent Ebola outbreak (2018) is in The Democratic Republic of Congo. Travelers could be infected if they come into contact with blood or body fluids from someone who is sick or has died from Ebola, infected wildlife, or meat from an infected animal.

How can Ebola transmission be prevented?

Healthcare workers/family/friends who may be exposed to people with Ebola should follow these steps:

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Practice proper infection control and sterilization measures.
- Isolate patients with Ebola from other patients/people.
- Avoid direct contact with the bodies of people who have died from Ebola.
- Notify the ESU if you have had direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola.

Avoid nonessential travel to locations where an outbreak of Ebola is occurring. If you must travel, please make sure to do the following:

- Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid contact with blood and body fluids. Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared from these animals or meat from an unknown source.
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
- Monitor your health after you return for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola.

Are there any vaccines to prevent Ebola virus?

Presently there are no FDA approved vaccines to prevent Ebola Virus.

What should I do if I become ill after travelling to a country where there is an outbreak of Ebola Virus?

- Sick travelers should delay travel until cleared to travel by a doctor or public health authority.
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola up to **21** days after your return.
- Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the office or emergency room. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the office.

Are local authorities monitoring the Ebola outbreak?

The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit in the Ministry of Health regularly monitors communicable diseases and syndromes that may affect our community both locally and globally. This monitoring allows for early detection and appropriate response to unusual events and outbreaks of disease such as Ebola.

Should residents of Bermuda be concerned?

Residents should follow the recommended precautions.

The 2014 outbreak in Africa was so severe because of a lack of resources, inadequate infection-control measures, and mistrust of health workers and government.

Bermuda, by contrast, has adequate resources and a far better public-health infrastructure.

Adapted from:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018. *Ebola Virus Disease Fact Sheet*. Retrieved on October 3, 2019 from <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/ebola-factsheet-P.pdf>