

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: EBOLA

October 1, 2014

ABOUT EBOLA

What is Ebola?

Ebola virus disease is a severe, often deadly illness that affects humans and non-human primates (monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees). The disease most often causes fevers of 101.5°F or higher, severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Signs and symptoms can appear anywhere from two to 21 days after being exposed to the Ebola virus, but they most commonly begin within eight to 10 days after exposure.

Symptoms usually include:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising

Who is most at risk of getting Ebola?

Health care professionals who take care of Ebola patients – as well as family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients – have the highest risk of getting the disease because they might come in direct contact with the blood or body fluids of those with the virus.

How does Ebola spread?

The Ebola virus is spread by **directly touching** an infected person or animal's skin, blood or body fluids. **You cannot get Ebola simply by being near someone who is infected** – it is not spread through the air or in water. People are only contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.

Since the Ebola virus can survive on surfaces for a short period of time, people can also get it by touching objects (like needles or bed sheets) that have been contaminated by infected blood or body fluids.

How is Ebola treated?

There is currently no vaccine or medicine that has been proven to cure Ebola. People who have the disease are treated for individual disease symptoms as they appear. For instance, if used early in the illness, the following treatments can improve someone's chances of survival: providing fluids; maintaining oxygen levels and blood pressure; and treating other infections if they occur.

Can someone who survives Ebola still spread the virus?

Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus. However, Ebola has been found in semen for up to three months after someone recovers from the disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises people who recover from Ebola to either not have sex or use condoms for three months after getting better.

THE EBOLA OUTBREAK

Where has Ebola been reported?

Ebola originates in Africa and is not found naturally in the United States. Africa is currently experiencing history's largest outbreak of the disease in the countries of Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

On September 30, 2014, the United States confirmed its first case of Ebola in a person who had traveled to Dallas, Texas from Liberia. The patient did not have symptoms when leaving West Africa, but developed symptoms approximately four days after arriving in the U.S. The CDC and other public health officials are working to prevent the spread of this disease by identifying people who had close contact with the ill patient and monitoring them for several weeks. The ill patient is currently isolated and receiving treatment in a Dallas hospital.



Ebola can **ONLY** be spread by directly touching an infected person or animal's skin, blood or body fluids – **you cannot get the virus simply by being near someone who is infected.** Because the ill person did not have any Ebola symptoms during their travel from West Africa to Texas, the CDC is not recommending monitoring for people on the same commercial airline flights.

How can I protect myself against Ebola?

If you are in or plan to travel to any of the African countries affected by the Ebola outbreak, you can protect yourself by doing the following:

- Washing hands frequently
- Avoiding contact with anyone's blood and body fluids – particularly someone who is sick
- Not handling items that may contain an infected person's blood or body fluids
- Not touching the body of someone who has died from Ebola
- Not touching bats, monkeys, gorillas or chimpanzees or their blood and fluids
- Not eating "bushmeat" (wild animals that are hunted for food)
- Avoiding hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated
- Seeking medical care immediately if you develop [Ebola symptoms](#)

***It should be noted that CDC advises against non essential travel.**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

What should I do if I think I might have Ebola?

The only people at risk in the current outbreak are those who traveled to Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria or Sierra Leone in the past three weeks **and** might have had direct contact with a person showing symptoms or an animal infected with Ebola.

If you recently traveled from one of the affected African countries and develop fever within three weeks after leaving that country, seek medical care right away and tell your doctor about your recent travel. Make sure you call the doctor's office or emergency room before going and tell them about your recent travel and symptoms so that arrangements can be made, if needed, to prevent others from becoming sick.

Where can I get more information about Ebola?

Visit the Ebola section of the CDC's website at: www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola.