

Ebola

What is Ebola disease?

Ebola disease is caused by the Ebola virus and is one of a number of hemorrhagic fever diseases. Ebola disease causes severe illness in which 50-90 percent of those infected die. Ebola disease was first discovered in 1976 in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo near the Ebola River.

What are the symptoms of Ebola disease?

- Fever
- Headache
- Joint and muscle aches
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

Some patients have a rash, red eyes, hiccups, cough, sore throat, chest pain, difficulty breathing or swallowing, or bleeding inside and outside the body.

Symptoms usually start 4-10 days after coming into contact with Ebola virus but can occur as early as 2 days to up to 21 days after exposure.

How is Ebola disease spread?

Ebola virus is thought to be transmitted to people from wild animals and then spreads in humans from one person to another. While the exact source of the virus in animals is unknown, Ebola has been found in bats and primates. The virus is thought to be transmitted to humans through the infected animal's body fluids, such as eating an infected animal.

Among humans, Ebola virus is spread by direct contact with:

- Blood, organs or other body fluids (e.g., urine, breast milk, sweat, vomit, semen) of an infected person or the body of a person who has died from Ebola disease
- Objects/surfaces contaminated by body fluids of a person infected with Ebola virus, for example clothing or bedding contaminated by an ill person.

A person infected with the Ebola virus cannot pass it to others before any symptoms appear.

Spread of Ebola has occurred in hospitals and clinics to health care workers who have contact with body fluids while treating patients and to others through re-use of contaminated medical equipment (such as needles) without proper sterilization.

Who is at risk for Ebola disease?

Health care providers caring for Ebola patients and family and friends in close contact with an ill person are at highest risk because they may come into contact with blood or body fluids.

How do you treat Ebola disease?

There is no medication that cures a patient of the infection. Treatment for Ebola disease is supportive, meaning providing fluids, maintaining blood pressure, replacing lost blood. There is also no vaccine or medication to prevent Ebola disease. Seeking health care as soon as symptoms appear increases the chances of surviving. It also prevents other people from getting infected because they will not come into contact with blood and body fluids of infected people.

How do you prevent Ebola disease?

Prevention should focus on avoiding contact with the virus, this can be done by:

- Avoid contact with blood and body fluids of those who are ill.
- Wash your hands often.
- Don't handle items that have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Avoid contact with monkeys, baboons, bats or eat wild animals or bush meat.
- Avoid areas with outbreaks.
- Use protective clothing such as gloves, masks, gowns when caring for sick persons.

What about travel?

Before you travel

- Talk with your doctor or a travel medicine clinic if you are planning a trip to areas of Western Africa where outbreaks are occurring, including Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- Check the CDC's Travelers' Health website for travel notices on specific diseases and countries, see wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices.

After you travel

If anyone gets a fever, headache, joint and muscle aches within three weeks of returning from your trip.

- Call your doctor or clinic right away. They will let you know if you need to come in for a visit.
- Tell your doctor where you traveled, what activities you were involved in, and if you had contact with anyone who had Ebola.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Ebola, www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/
- Travelers' Health, wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/
- Telephone: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

World Health Organization

- Ebola and international travel, www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/



Minnesota Department of Health
Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control Division
PO Box 64975, Saint Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 www.health.state.mn.us
