

Questions and Answers on Ebola

Updated: August 20, 2014

The current Ebola outbreak is centered on four countries in West Africa: Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, although there is the potential for further spread to neighboring African countries. Ebola does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public. The CDC is surging resources by sending 50 more workers to the area to help bring the outbreak under control.

What is Ebola?

Ebola virus is the cause of a viral hemorrhagic fever disease. Symptoms of Ebola include fever and additional symptoms like severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to ebolavirus, although 8-10 days is most common.

How is Ebola transmitted?

The virus is spread through **direct contact** (through broken skin or unprotected mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth) with the blood or body fluids (urine, feces, saliva, semen, and other secretions) of a person who is sick with Ebola, or with objects like needles that have been contaminated with the virus, or infected animals.

Ebola is **not** spread through the air or by water or, in general, by food; however, in Africa, Ebola may be spread as a result of hunting, processing, and consuming infected animals (e.g., bushmeat).

Can I get Ebola from a person who is infected but doesn't have any symptoms?

No. A person infected with Ebola virus is not contagious until symptoms appear.

Are there any cases of individuals contracting Ebola in the United States?

No. As of August 15, no confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in the United States, with the exception of two U.S. healthcare workers who were infected with Ebola virus in Liberia were transported to a hospital in the United States. Other patients under investigation in the United States have all tested negative for Ebola.

What is being done to prevent ill passengers in West Africa from getting on a plane?

CDC is assisting with exit screening and communication efforts on the ground in West Africa to prevent sick travelers from getting on planes. In addition, airports in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are screening outbound travelers for Ebola symptoms, including fever, and passengers are required to respond to a health questionnaire. CDC is also surging support in the region by deploying 50 additional workers to help build capacity on the ground.



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What is CDC doing in the United States?

On the remote possibility that an ill traveler arrives the U.S., CDC has protocols in place to protect against further spread of disease. These include notification to CDC of ill travelers on a plane before arrival, evaluation of ill travelers, isolation and transport to a medical facility if needed. CDC, along with Customs & Border Patrol, have also provided guidance to airlines for managing ill passengers and crew and for disinfecting aircraft. CDC has issued a Health Alert Notice reminding U.S. healthcare workers of the importance of taking steps to prevent the spread of this virus, how to test and isolate suspected patients and how they can protect themselves from infection.

What about ill Americans with Ebola who are being brought to the United States for treatment? How is CDC protecting the American public?

CDC has very well-established protocols in place to ensure the safe transport and care of patients with infectious diseases back to the United States. These procedures cover the entire process -- from patients leaving their bedside in a foreign country to their transport to an airport and boarding a non-commercial airplane equipped with a special transport isolation unit, to their arrival at a medical facility in the United States that is appropriately equipped and staffed to handle such cases. CDC's role is to ensure that travel and hospitalization is done to minimize risk of spread of infection and to ensure that the American public is protected. Patients were evacuated in similar ways during SARS.

What does the CDC's Travel Alert Level 3 mean to U.S. travelers?

CDC recommends that U.S. residents avoid nonessential travel to Liberia. If you must travel, such as for humanitarian aid work in response to the outbreak, protect yourself by following CDC's advice for avoiding contact with the blood and body fluids of people who are ill with Ebola.

For more information please see [this statement](#) from the Department of State.

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