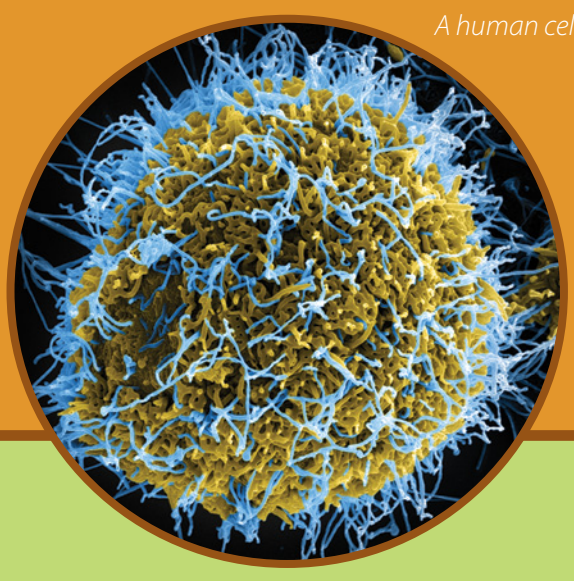

A human cell infected with Ebola

HOW EBOLA IS SPREAD

Is Ebola airborne?

Ebola is not a respiratory disease and is not spread through the airborne route.

Can Ebola be spread by coughing or sneezing?

There is no evidence that Ebola is spread by coughing or sneezing. Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola; the virus is not transmitted through the air (like measles virus). However, large droplets (splashes or sprays) of respiratory or other secretions from a person who is sick with Ebola could be infectious, and therefore certain precautions (called standard, contact, and droplet precautions) are recommended for use in healthcare settings to prevent the transmission of Ebola from patients to healthcare personnel and other patients or family members.

Is Ebola spread through droplets?

To get Ebola, you have to directly get body fluids (blood, diarrhea, sweat, vomit, urine, semen, breast milk) from someone who is sick with Ebola in your mouth, nose, eyes or through a break in your skin. That can happen by being splashed with droplets, or through other direct contact, like touching infectious body fluids.

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 when they touch or are splashed by infectious blood or body fluids from a sick patient.

How do I protect myself from getting sick?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces like bathroom surfaces, since some germs can stay infectious on surfaces for hours or days and lead to transmission.

What's the difference between infections spread through the air or by droplets?

AIRBORNE SPREAD

Airborne spread happens when germs float through the air after a person talks, coughs, or sneezes. Those germs can be inhaled even after the original person is no longer nearby.

Direct contact with the infectious person is NOT needed for someone else to get sick.

Germs like chicken pox and TB are spread through the air.

DROPLET SPREAD

Droplet spread happens when fluids in large droplets from a sick person splash the eyes, nose, or mouth of another person or through a cut in the skin. Droplets may cause short-term environmental contamination, like a soiled bathroom surface or handrails, from which another person can pick up the infectious material.

Germs like plague can be spread through large droplets. Ebola might be spread through large droplets but only when a person is very sick.

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