

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: EBOLA

Updated October 16, 2014

Note: New information is in **RED**

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, 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
- 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 viruses are found in several African countries. They are not naturally found in the United States. Africa is currently experiencing an outbreak of the disease in the western countries of Guinea, Liberia 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. Referred to as the “index patient”, the individual did not have symptoms when leaving West Africa, but developed symptoms approximately four days after arriving in the U.S. and subsequently died from the illness.

Two healthcare workers who cared for the index patient recently tested positive for Ebola. The CDC and public health officials in Texas are identifying people who had close personal contact with the healthcare workers.



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.**

How can I protect myself against Ebola?

If you are in or plan to travel to any of the West African countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea) 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
- Avoiding West African hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated
- 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)
- 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 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.

What is the Department of Health doing to prepare for Ebola?

The department continues to work closely with CDC, other states and our public health partners in Pennsylvania to prepare for Ebola. We have been regularly communicating with hospitals, physicians, schools, emergency medical services, 911 operators and other partners to help ensure that our public health networks in the state are aware of the most current protocols and procedures and that our preparedness and response efforts are closely coordinated.

If there are any new Ebola developments globally or in the U.S., we will watch, learn and adjust here in Pennsylvania and provide any new information, as necessary. The department's priority is to take all necessary precautions in Pennsylvania to prepare for Ebola and protect the public's health.

At this time, there is not an Ebola case in Pennsylvania. Should there be a public health threat, the department will immediately share guidance and information with the public and our public health partners.

Where can I get more information about Ebola?

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