



## Ebola Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Ebola?

Ebola is a severe, often fatal disease caused by a virus.

### How is Ebola spread?

Ebola is spread by direct contact (through broken skin or your mouth, eyes or nose) with

- Body fluids (such as blood, vomit, urine, feces and sweat) of a person sick with Ebola. **People only become contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.**
- Objects soiled with the body fluids of a person sick with Ebola.
- The body of a person who died from Ebola.

Ebola is **not** spread through the air or simply by being near someone who is infected. It is very difficult to spread Ebola during brief, casual contact, like a handshake or bumping into someone on the subway.

During outbreaks, the disease can spread within health care settings if workers do not wear protective gear and take proper precautions.

### Are some body fluids more infectious than others?

Yes. Certain types of body fluids, like blood, vomit and feces tend to be more infectious than others, like saliva and sweat. This is because blood, vomit and feces hold more of the virus (or “viral load.”) Also, body fluids from very sick patients (those at a more severe stage of illness) are more infectious than body fluids of those who are first reporting symptoms.

### What are the symptoms of Ebola?

The disease usually starts with an abrupt fever, possibly with headache and joint and muscle aches. Other symptoms may include:

- Nausea
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

Some patients may also experience:

- Rash
- Red eyes
- Hiccups
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Chest pain
- Problems breathing
- Problems swallowing
- Bleeding inside and outside the body

### When do symptoms first appear?

Symptoms usually appear eight to 10 days after exposure but may appear anywhere from two to 21 days after exposure. **People only become contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.**

If a person does not develop symptoms within 21 days after exposure, he or she is not at risk for Ebola.

### **How serious is Ebola?**

The severity of the disease varies, but over 50% of patients with Ebola have died during past outbreaks.

### **How is Ebola treated?**

There is no approved medication for Ebola. Treatment focuses on supportive care and may require intensive care unit support. Experimental vaccines and treatments are in development but have not been fully tested for safety or effectiveness in people.

### **How can Ebola infection be prevented?**

Measures to stop the disease from spreading include

- Quickly identifying people who might be infected with Ebola virus
- Isolating Ebola patients from contact with uninfected people
- Following infection control guidelines in health care facilities (i.e. sterilizing medical equipment and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment)
- Monitoring the health of people who may have come into contact with an infected person

### **Am I at risk if I traveled to West Africa?**

You are not at risk unless you traveled to Guinea or Sierra Leone, **and** had direct contact with the body fluids of a person sick with Ebola or with a person who died from Ebola. **People only become contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.**

If you traveled to other parts of Africa than Guinea or Sierra Leone, **you are not at risk for Ebola.**

The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) issued a travel advisory urging all U.S. residents to avoid non-essential travel to Guinea or Sierra Leone: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. Visit the CDC's website for the most up-to-date information on the Ebola outbreak: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola>.

### **Can I get Ebola on the subway?**

There is virtually no risk of getting Ebola by taking public transportation. No precautions are needed when traveling on public transportation. However, in order to prevent common illnesses, like the flu, the Health Department recommends that you wash your hands often.

### **Can Ebola be spread by sneezing or coughing?**

According to the CDC, there is no evidence that Ebola is spread by coughing or sneezing. Ebola is spread through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola; the virus is not spread 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. For more information, see the CDC's guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/infections-spread-by-air-or-droplets.pdf>

### **What should I do if I think I have Ebola?**

***If you visited one of the affected countries and develop fever or other symptoms within 21 days after leaving that country, call 911 right away. You will receive help regardless of immigration status or ability to pay. Make sure to tell medical staff about your travel history and if you had direct contact with a person who might have had Ebola.***

**Should I be worried about my pet dog or cat?**

There have not been any reports of dogs or cats having symptoms of Ebola or making other people sick with Ebola. The risk of a pet in the U.S. being exposed to Ebola is extremely low, but if a pet were exposed, the CDC recommends that it be evaluated by public health officials and a veterinarian. More information on pets is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/gas-pets.html>

**Should I use any special cleaning products or methods in my home, business or building when cleaning body fluids, because of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa?**

No. Use normal cleaning products, and always take proper precautions when cleaning any body fluids (such as blood or vomit). If a confirmed case of Ebola results in body fluid contamination outside of a health care facility, the Health Department will assess the site and will arrange for safe clean up by a professional contractor.

**What should I do if I'm feeling stressed about the Ebola outbreak?**

Disease outbreaks like the Ebola epidemic can be stressful. People may feel worried, frustrated or powerless. It is normal to feel this way. Try to be patient with yourself and those around you, and give yourself time to cope.

For more information, including specific tips on coping with stress, how to know if you need professional help and how to find it, see "Dealing with Stressful Events":

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/ebola-stressful-events.pdf>

If you or someone you know needs help, call LifeNet (800-543-3638), a free 24-hour, seven-days-a-week helpline. Help is available in many languages, and the information you share will be kept private.