



Ebola Frequently Asked Questions

What is Ebola?

Ebola virus disease is a severe, often fatal disease that affects humans and some animals (like monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees). It is caused by the Ebola virus.

Currently, there is an Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The first-ever U.S. case of Ebola was diagnosed in late September, when a patient who had traveled from West Africa to Texas became sick.

How does Ebola spread?

Ebola is spread by directly touching an infected person's skin, blood or body fluids. It is not spread through the air or simply by being near someone who is infected. People only become contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.

Since the virus can survive on surfaces for a short time, people can be infected by touching objects (like needles or bed sheets) that contain infected blood or body fluids.

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

What is happening with the current outbreak?

The current outbreak is largely taking place in three West African countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

On September 30, 2014, the first travel-related U.S. case of Ebola was diagnosed in Dallas, Texas. The patient did not have symptoms when leaving Liberia in West Africa, but started to feel sick days after arriving in Dallas.

Since the situation is evolving, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) website for the most up-to-date information on countries affected by Ebola outbreak: <http://www.cdc.gov/ebola>.

Now that someone in the U.S. has been diagnosed with Ebola, am I at a higher risk?

No. The only way to get infected with Ebola is to directly come into contact with an infected person's blood or body fluid. The nation's top health experts are continuing to monitor the outbreak, including the recent situation in Dallas, and are working with health care providers, hospitals and others to make sure that everyone is prepared to handle another case of Ebola if it were to occur in the U.S.

Am I at risk if I traveled to West Africa?

If you traveled to one of the affected West African countries in the past three weeks, you are not at risk unless you had direct contact with a person infected with Ebola.

The CDC issued a travel advisory urging all U.S. residents to avoid non-essential travel to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

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.

How serious is Ebola?

The severity of the disease varies, but over 50% of patients with Ebola have died during past outbreaks. Researchers do not fully understand why some people who become sick with Ebola recover while others do not.

How is Ebola treated?

There is no known effective medication for Ebola infection. Treatment focuses on supportive care and may require intensive care unit support. There is no vaccine for Ebola.

Can Ebola infection be prevented?

Measures to stop the disease from spreading include

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

What should I do if I think I have Ebola?

The only people at risk in the current outbreak are those who might have had direct contact with a person with known or possible Ebola.

If you visited one of the affected countries and develop fever within three weeks after leaving that country, seek medical care right away. Make sure to tell your doctor if you had direct contact with a person who might have had Ebola. Be sure to alert the doctor's office or emergency room about your symptoms before going so that arrangements can be made, if needed, to prevent others from becoming sick. For more information, call 311.