

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Ebola Virus



Burlington County Health Department

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Public Health
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Burlington County Health Department
Health Starts Here

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF). VHFs are infectious diseases that interfere with the blood's ability to clot, resulting in excessive bleeding. These types of diseases can also damage walls of blood vessels resulting in internal bleeding. Ebola is only one type of viral hemorrhagic fever. It is rare and deadly. Ebola can cause disease in humans and primates such as monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola, but the average is 8 to 10 days. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Extreme tiredness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Bleeding from the eyes, ears, nose, and rectum

How is Ebola spread?

When an infection happens in humans, the virus can spread to other through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, or mouth). The virus is found in:

- Blood or body fluids (spit, sweat, poop, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola
- Objects like needles and syringes that have been contaminated with bodily fluids or used by a person who has or has died from Ebola
- Infected fruit bats or primates (apes and monkeys)
- Possibly contact with semen from a man who has recovered from Ebola (for example, by having oral, vaginal, or anal sex)

Ebola is **not** spread through the air, by water, or in general by food. However, in Africa, Ebola may be spread from handling bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food) and contact with infected bats. There is no evidence that mosquitos or other bugs spread Ebola virus. Only a few species of mammals (humans, bats, monkeys, and apes) have shown the ability to become infected with and spread Ebola virus.

What is my risk of getting Ebola virus?

For most people, the risk of getting Ebola virus is very low. Ebola is not found in the U.S. Healthcare workers caring for Ebola patients and scientists conducting scientific research on Ebola are at a higher risk. Traveling to Africa can also increase your risk of getting Ebola, as this is where the virus is normally found.

How is Ebola prevented?

For most people, Ebola is not something to worry about in your day-to-day life. However, if you are traveling to an area affected by an Ebola outbreak, make sure to do the following:

- Practice careful hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water and avoid contact with blood and bodily fluids
- Do not handle items that may have come into contact with an infected person's blood
- Avoid facilities in West Africa where Ebola patients are being treated.
- Avoid contact with semen from a man who has had Ebola until you know the Ebola is gone from his semen

Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.

How is Ebola treated?

Symptoms of Ebola and complications are treated as they appear. The following basic interventions, when used early, can significantly improve the chances of survival:

- Providing intravenous fluids (IV) and balancing electrolytes (body salts).
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure.
- Treating other infections if they occur.

Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive care and the patient's immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years, possibly longer. It is not known if people who recover are immune for life or if they can become infected with a different species of Ebola. Some people who have recovered from Ebola have developed long-term complications, such as joint and vision problems

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor, nurse, or clinic

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/ebola

The Burlington County Health Department at (609) 265-5548

The New Jersey Department of Health at www.nj.gov/health