



Fact Sheet: Ebola

Ebola, previously known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. Ebola viruses are found in several African countries. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically in Africa. The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa is the largest in history, primarily centered in the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Through October 10, 2014, more than 4000 deaths from Ebola have been reported that are associated with the outbreak in West Africa.

How Ebola Is Spread

Ebola is spread through direct contact with blood and body fluids of a person infected with Ebola **AND** who is symptomatic. A person infected with Ebola can't spread the disease until symptoms appear.

The time from exposure to when signs or symptoms of the disease appear (the incubation period) is 2 to 21 days, but the average time is 8 to 10 days. Signs of Ebola include fever (higher than 101.5°F) and symptoms like severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.

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

- Blood and body fluids (like urine, feces, saliva, vomit, sweat, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola.
- Objects (like needles) that have been contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola.
- Ebola is **NOT** spread through the air, water, or food.

Preventing Ebola Infection

There is no vaccine available for Ebola that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.

You can protect yourself from Ebola by doing the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- DON'T touch the blood or body fluids (like urine, feces, saliva, vomit, sweat, and semen) of people who are sick.
- DON'T handle items that may have come in contact with a sick person's blood or body fluids, like clothes, bedding, needles, or medical equipment.
- DON'T touch the body of someone who has died of Ebola.

Efforts to Prevent Spread of Ebola in the United States

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the lead agency responsible for protecting the U.S. public health. Specific to Ebola, the CDC is building its capacity for testing and surveillance, and reinforcing infection control procedures for health workers. They are training medical responders, flight crews, and airport workers about how to report a sick passenger to the CDC and how to protect their employees and travelers.

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Five major U.S. international airports are screening patients coming from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone for fever and possible Ebola exposure, according to the CDC and the Department of Homeland Security. Screening—checking for fever—is taking place at New York's JFK International Airport, Washington-Dulles, Newark, Chicago-O'Hare, and Atlanta. More than 90 percent of the travelers from West Africa arrive via these points of entry into the U.S.

In San Diego County, the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has specific processes in place if a local hospital or physician identifies a patient they think might have contracted Ebola. These processes follow the guidance given by the CDC and California Department of Public Health.

If a case of Ebola were to happen locally, HHSA has well-trained staff that would investigate and locate the recent contacts of the infected individual. Close contacts of the infected individual would be placed under observation for 21 days for any signs of the Ebola virus to stop the possible spread of the disease.

For More Information

HHSA Community Epidemiology Page on Ebola:

http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/community_epidemiology/dc/ebola.html

CDC's Page on 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/index.html>

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