
Ebola Frequently Asked Questions

October 14, 2014

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

- Fever Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

How long after exposure to Ebola do symptoms begin?

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

How is Ebola spread?

When an infection does occur in humans, the virus can be spread in several ways to others. Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth) with:

- Blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola
- Objects (like needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus
- Infected animals
- Ebola is not spread through the air or by water, or in general, by food. However, in Africa, Ebola may also be spread as a result of handling bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food) and contact with infected bats. There is no evidence that mosquitos or other insects can transmit Ebola virus. Only mammals (for example, humans, bats, monkeys, and apes) have shown the ability to become infected with and spread Ebola virus.

What does “direct contact” mean?

Direct contact means that body fluids (e.g., blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, or feces) from an infected person (alive or dead) have touched someone’s eyes, nose, mouth, or an open cut, wound, or abrasion of the skin.

Who can get Ebola?

At this time persons who have resided in or traveled to Sierra Leona, Liberia, or Guinea in West Africa who potentially came into direct contact with Ebola could have been infected and become sick within 21 days after the exposure to Ebola.

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RESPONSE

1190 St. Francis Drive, N1320 • Santa Fe, New Mexico • 87502-6110
(505) 827-0006 • FAX: (505) 827-2110 • <http://www.nmhealth.org>

Ebola Frequently Asked Questions

October 14, 2014

How long does Ebola live outside the body?

Ebola is killed with hospital-grade disinfectants (such as household bleach). If dried surfaces such as doorknobs and countertops are cleaned regularly with disinfectants that kill Ebola, the virus could survive only a short time – up to 24 hours. However, Ebola virus in some body fluids such as blood can survive up to several days at room temperature.

How is Ebola treated?

- No FDA-approved vaccine or medicine (e.g., antiviral drug) is available for Ebola.
- Symptoms of Ebola 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

Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness. Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive care and the patient's immune response.

What should I do if I think someone might have Ebola?

- The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) recommends that all healthcare providers consider Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in the differential diagnosis of any patient who resided in or traveled to any of the Ebola-affected countries (currently Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea) within 21 days before onset of symptoms and immediately contact the Epidemiology and Response Division at 505-827-0006 on a 24/7/365 basis.
- NMDOH encourages healthcare providers to contact 505-827-0006 even for patients who do not meet all of the CDC clinical and exposure criteria. If patients have resided in or traveled to the affected countries (even if they do not have a fever at the time of evaluation), please call 505-827-0006 immediately (24/7).