



Ebola FAQs for West African Communities

What are Ebola symptoms?

The symptoms of Ebola include fever, severe headache, muscle pain, weakness, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising. Illness can start with only one or two symptoms being present. But the only way to know for sure if someone has Ebola is through a blood test.

Can I get Ebola from a person who is infected but doesn't have any symptoms?

No. People who do not have symptoms are not contagious. For Ebola to be transmitted, a person must have direct contact with a person who has symptoms of Ebola.

How does someone become infected with Ebola?

Ebola spreads through direct contact with:

- an infected person's blood or body fluids (such as saliva or urine), when they are having symptoms;
- objects (like needles, diapers, clothing) that have infected body fluids on them;
- an infected animal, or by eating infected bushmeat (like monkeys, bats, forest antelope, chimpanzees, and gorillas).

Can Ebola be transmitted through the air?

No. Ebola is not a respiratory disease like the flu, so it is not transmitted through the air.

Can I get Ebola from food or water?

No. Ebola does not spread through food, EXCEPT through infected bushmeat.

No. Ebola does not spread through water.

Is there a cure for Ebola?

We do not yet have a cure for Ebola, but there are still many things doctors can do to improve the chances of survival. That is why it is important to identify Ebola as early as possible and seek medical care right away. The quicker that someone is in care, the better their chances of beating Ebola. Several different treatments are being tested but we don't know yet if they can cure Ebola.

What should I do if someone from an Ebola-affected country visits me?

Welcome your visitor knowing that we now have Ebola screening at airports so anyone who has

been in an affected country in the past three weeks should already be involved in active monitoring, meaning taking their temperature and recording any other symptoms twice a day and reporting to their local health department at least once a day. If you know of someone who is not being actively monitored but should be, refer the person to their local health department for a risk assessment. If your visitor develops symptoms and has recently travelled to Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia, call the health department or 911 and tell them your visitor is visiting from one of these three countries and needs assistance. **Remember: People who do not have symptoms are not contagious.**

What if I have visited an affected country?

If you have been back for more than 21 days, then you have passed the incubation period and do not need to worry about Ebola. If it has been less than 21 days and you are not being actively monitored, please call your local health department. No one is contagious if they don't have symptoms, but monitoring for symptoms makes sure that people get medical care quickly and that their family and friends are protected.

Why are public health departments 'actively monitoring' travelers from West Africa?

Public health officials are actively monitoring every single person who returns from West African countries that have widespread transmission of Ebola. At this time, these countries are Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Active monitoring adds another layer of protection against transmission of Ebola in America. Every single person who arrives from one of these countries is checked for symptoms at the airport and then monitored for 21 days to make sure he or she does not develop any symptoms that are associated with Ebola.

Active monitoring allows public health officials to provide **immediate support and early and safe access to medical care** in case Ebola symptoms develop. Early medical treatment can be lifesaving in cases of Ebola. Individuals who are being actively monitored should have contact information for a public health nurse or someone else they can quickly get in touch with if they have questions or concerns. Active monitoring allows travelers and public health officials to establish relationships that can help keep individuals and their families safe.

Who should I call if I have recently traveled to Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia and now feel sick?

If you have traveled to one these four countries in the past 21 days and now feel sick, you should call your local health department or 911. It is important to remember that anyone who might be sick with Ebola should be examined and treated in the hospital so they can have the best possible chance of getting well and won't make others sick.

What if I don't have health insurance?

Ebola is considered a public health emergency. If you believe you have been exposed to Ebola and have symptoms (fever, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.) you should be evaluated by medical personnel. When you arrive at a hospital they will treat you regardless of your ability to pay or your insurance status.

What about other health issues that aren't related to Ebola?

It is extremely important to take care of your health! Be sure to get your flu shot, wash your hands often and get all children to the doctor for their regular vaccinations. It is far more likely that you will get sick with flu or other illnesses than with Ebola, so please take care of yourself and your family. There is nothing to fear from going to the doctor's office or to a hospital.

What kind of treatment do people in the US get for Ebola?

A person who is sick with Ebola is admitted to the hospital, where they can get the best possible care. Medical support at a hospital can prevent dehydration, treat diarrhea and other symptoms and help to support a sick person's body until he or she can recover from the infection.

Is that treatment different from treatment in Africa?

The treatment is basically the same everywhere: medical support so the body has time to recover from the infection. However, the United States does have much more extensive health care resources, so patients with Ebola can get more intensive support than is available in most health care facilities in the affected countries in West Africa.

What if sick passengers in West Africa attempt to board a plane to come to the US?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is assisting with active screening and education efforts in West Africa to prevent sick travelers from getting on planes. Airports in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia are screening all outbound passengers for Ebola symptoms. Passengers are required to respond to a health questionnaire and have their temperature measured before being allowed on international flights. CDC is sending staff to the affected areas to help build capacity of local health care workers and to help bring the outbreak under control.

What if someone appears sick when their plane arrives in the United States?

People arriving from the affected countries in West Africa are now being screened for Ebola when they arrive. The CDC and Customs and Border Patrol have protocols and professional staff in place to do this. Sick travelers from the affected countries are isolated at ports of entry.

CDC has also provided guidance to airlines for managing ill passengers and crew and for disinfecting aircraft, and issued health alert notices for travelers and U.S. health care workers on the importance of taking steps to prevent the spread of this virus, how to test and isolate possible patients, and how they can protect themselves from infection.

What should I do if I hear about people being treated badly because they are from West Africa?

It is sadly true that people do not always react well to stressful situations. Many people still don't have the real facts about Ebola and so they may react out of ignorance and fear. If you or someone you know is harassed or threatened:

- Do not engage the harasser
- Do report the harassment to the local health department and the police if you feel there is danger

- Do form supportive community groups with faith-based organizations, businesses, and other people who may be affected, and partner with your local health department to develop community information sessions.
- Do not avoid businesses or locations. Remember, in our country of 316 million people, only 2 have contracted Ebola here! You are not going to contract Ebola in your day-to-day life.

Who can I call with other questions about Ebola?

North Carolina now has a Public Information Line about Ebola at **1-844-836-8714** which is open all the time. You can ask any question you need, including what to watch for and what to do if you think you or someone you know could get sick.

SOURCES

About Ebola, Questions and Answer: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/qa.html>

Ebola North Carolina Preparedness FAQs: NC Division of Public Health
<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/ebola/EbolaPublicFAQ.pdf>