



Ebola in Non-Healthcare Workplaces: Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a serious, often fatal, disease caused by the Ebola virus. It is one of a group of infections known as the viral hemorrhagic fevers.

What is an Ebola outbreak?

A disease outbreak is when many people in a community develop the same disease at the same time. Ebola virus has been the cause of periodic outbreaks of infection in Africa since 1976. Typically, these outbreaks have resolved over the course of several months, and infections have not spread to other geographic areas of the world.

Where is Ebola occurring now?

Since early 2014, an Ebola outbreak has been ongoing in three countries in West Africa -- Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. This outbreak is by far the largest and most long-lasting of all Ebola outbreaks to date, affecting more than 9,000 individuals.

Has Ebola ever occurred in the U.S.?

There are three ways that Ebola has occurred in this country. First, some patients who acquired infection in Africa have been transported to the U.S. for medical care. These are typically American healthcare workers who had been providing medical relief in the outbreak regions. Second, an asymptomatic traveler from West Africa has arrived in the U.S., unknowingly already infected. Third, healthcare workers providing direct patient care to an Ebola patient were accidentally infected following exposure to blood and body fluids.

What is the risk of Ebola being transmitted among the U.S. population?

Ebola does not pose a significant risk of transmission within the U.S. It is not an airborne infection and is not highly contagious. Rapid recognition of Ebola cases allows medical and public health officials to isolate or quarantine anyone who might be at risk of spreading the infection.

What is the incubation period for Ebola?

Ebola symptoms develop between 2 and 21 days after a person is infected. The average incubation period is 8-10 days.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms can include:

- Fever, usually $>100.4^{\circ}$
- Headache
- Joint and Muscle Aches
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach Pain
- Lack of Appetite
- Abnormal Bleeding

How does Ebola spread?

Ebola is spread through direct contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of a sick person.

Ebola can also be spread through funeral rites that involve touching the body of a person who died of Ebola. It is not spread through food, water, or the air.

Can someone who has been exposed to Ebola spread the infection?

No. Ebola can only be spread by someone who is actively experiencing symptoms, usually after several days of being ill. There are no contagious asymptomatic “carriers” of Ebola.

If I have traveled to one of the 3 affected countries, am I at risk of getting Ebola?

Travelers to West Africa are at risk only if they provided medical care or participated in a funeral rite of a person who was sick from Ebola, without taking special precautions.

What should I do if I have traveled to West Africa recently?

If you returned from travel less than 21 days ago and are not sick, you should take your temperature two times a day to check for signs of a fever. If you have a fever >101 degrees, you should call your healthcare provider for advice. If you returned over 21 days ago, you are not at risk of getting sick from Ebola. The incubation period for this disease has passed.

Is there anything I should do to prevent Ebola?

The general population in the U.S. is not at risk of acquiring this infection. However, being health-conscious and taking action to prevent the spread of communicable diseases is always a good idea.

- Get vaccinated for flu every year
- Wash your hands often and avoid touching your face
- Cover your cough and dispose of tissues appropriately
- Stay home when you are sick

Additional Resources

- Philadelphia Department of Public Health: www.phila.gov/health
- U.S. Federal Government: www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html