

Frequently Asked Questions on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) August 2014

The current Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak is centered on three countries in West Africa: Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, although there is the potential for further spread to neighboring African countries. EVD does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is surging resources by sending 50 more workers to the area to help bring the outbreak under control.

What is Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)?

EVD is the cause of a viral hemorrhagic fever disease. Symptoms include: fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite, and abnormal bleeding. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the EVD virus, though 8 to 10 days is most common.

Q: Are there individuals who have contracted EVD in the U.S.?

No. Not at this time.

How is EVD spread?

EVD is spread through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected symptomatic person or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions.

Can EVD be spread through the air?

No. EVD is not a respiratory disease like the flu, so it is not spread through the air.

Can I get EVD from contaminated food or water?

No. EVD is not a food-borne illness. It is not a water-borne illness.

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

No. Individuals who do not have symptoms are not contagious.

What is being done to prevent ill passengers in West Africa from getting on a plane?

CDC is assisting with active screening and education efforts on the ground in West Africa to prevent sick travelers from getting on planes. In addition, airports in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea are screening all outbound passengers for EVD symptoms and passengers are required to respond to a healthcare questionnaire. CDC is also surging support in the region by deploying 50 additional workers to help build capacity on the ground.

What is CDC doing in the U.S.?

On the remote possibility that an ill passenger enters the U.S., CDC has protocols in place to protect against further spread of disease. These include notification to CDC of ill passengers on a plane before arrival, investigation of ill travelers, and if necessary isolation. CDC has also provided guidance to airlines for managing ill passengers and guidance to crew on how to disinfect the aircraft. CDC has issued a Health Alert Notice reminding U.S. healthcare workers of the importance of taking steps to prevent the spread of this virus, how to test and isolate suspected patients, and how they can protect themselves from infection.

What about ill Americans with EVD who are being brought to the U.S. for treatment? How is CDC protecting the American public?

CDC has very well-established protocols in place to ensure the safe transport and care of patients with infectious diseases who are returning to the United States. These procedures cover the entire process, which includes: (1) patients leaving their bedside in a foreign country and being transported to an airport (2) boarding a non-commercial airplane equipped with a special transport isolation unit (3) arriving at a medical facility in the United States that is appropriately equipped and staffed to handle such cases. CDC's role is to ensure that travel and hospitalization is done in a manner to minimize the risk of spreading infection and to ensure that the American public is protected.

What does the CDC's Travel Alert Level 3 mean to U.S. travelers?

On July 31, the CDC elevated their warning to U.S. citizens encouraging them to defer unnecessary travel to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone over concerns that travelers may not have access to health care facilities and personnel should they need them in these countries.

What is the County of Riverside Department of Public Health doing to prepare for EVD cases?

Public Health has well established protocols in place to respond to urgent communicable diseases like EVD. Doctors, hospitals and laboratories must report suspect cases immediately by telephone to Public Health. An investigation is conducted on reports of individuals who may have EVD. Public Health ensures that health care facilities are following appropriate infection control measures to protect other patients, visitors and staff.