

Ebola Frequently Asked Questions January 2023

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a severe, often deadly illness. It is caused by a virus that can spread from direct contact with the blood or body fluids of an ill, infected person.

The virus also infects some species of African bats. It can infect people and non-human primates through contact with the bats. Humans have also been infected by eating bushmeat—that is, meat from animals that had Ebola.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Early symptoms of Ebola are like those from the flu and malaria. The first symptoms are fever, weakness, muscle aches, headache, and sore throat. These are often followed by vomiting and diarrhea. People sick with Ebola may also have bleeding inside and outside of the body.

Symptoms appear two to 21 days after exposure to the disease. People may die of Ebola if their bodies lose too much blood and fluids. This can cause their organs – including brain, heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver – to stop working.

People can spread the disease as long as their blood and body fluids contain the virus. This means that bodies of those who died can also spread the disease.

What are the chances of survival for someone sick with Ebola?

About half of the people who had Ebola in recent outbreaks have survived. People who recover from Ebola usually cannot spread the disease. During the Ebola Zaire outbreak in 2014-2016, nine of eleven Ebola patients cared for in the U.S. (82%) survived.

How is Ebola spread from person to person?

People can catch Ebola by touching the body fluids of an infected person. These include blood, vomit, diarrhea, and urine. Below are ways people might have contact with these fluids.

- Touching objects used while caring for someone sick with Ebola. This includes things like dirty needles or soiled linens.
- When people die from Ebola, their bodies still carry the virus for a time. This is why touching the body can also spread disease. Handling the body of someone who died from Ebola could cause infection. Avoid such contact, even if it is part of a tradition,
- Sexual contact with a man who recovered from Ebola. The World Health Organization recommends:
 - Recovered men use a condom for safer sex. Men who recovered should do this until they have had two negative semen tests for Ebola virus.
 - Men who do not get tested should use a condom for at least 12 months after the date they first became ill.
- Ebola spreads from infected people who feel sick (see symptoms above) or who died from Ebola. It does not spread from an infected person before symptoms start.
- Ebola is not spread through the air, and it is not spread through water or through food, unless someone eats infected bush meat.

Are some people at higher risk than others for getting Ebola?

Most people in the United States are at no risk for Ebola. People who may be at risk are caregivers who touch body fluids when caring for an ill person.

- Family, friends, and healthcare workers caring for people sick with Ebola may be at higher risk.
- People who touch the body of someone who died from Ebola could also be at higher risk. These might be funeral staff or mourners.

People who take care of someone sick with Ebola or who died from it can take these steps to stay safe.

- Use recommended protective clothing when providing care.
- Clean or throw away items used to care for people sick with Ebola.

Does Ebola affect some groups more than others, based on age or underlying illness?

We haven't found that people with certain conditions or at certain ages are more likely to get Ebola. Ebola is bad for everyone. Even those with no underlying

conditions can get very sick. With the right care early on, people are more likely to survive.

How long can a person be at risk after touching clothing of an infected person?

Ebola is a weak virus outside the body. An object typically has to have a lot of blood or other body fluid on it to cause infection. If clothing or sheets are still wet with blood or other body fluids, virus could survive for several days. If someone is exposed to Ebola, illness begins within 21 days.

What can people do to protect themselves?

Avoid unneeded travel to areas affected by an Ebola outbreak. Travel warnings change as situations change. Check for the most current advisories on CDC's travel website: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

People who are in an area where Ebola is present can do these things to protect themselves.

- **Avoid blood and body fluids of ill people who might have Ebola.** This includes urine, feces, saliva, sweat, vomit, breast milk, amniotic fluid, and semen.
- **Avoid touching things soiled with an infected person's blood or body fluids.** Examples include clothes, bedding, needles, and medical equipment.
- **Even if it is tradition, avoid touching the body of someone who died or may have died from Ebola.** Touching the body is risky and may spread disease.
- **Avoid contact with semen from a man who recovered from Ebola.** Some men who recover from Ebola can spread the disease to sexual partners through their semen.

The World Health Organization recommends:

- Recovered men use a condom for safer sex. Men who recovered should do this until they have had two negative semen tests for Ebola virus.
- Men who do not get tested should use a condom for at least 12 months after the date they first became ill.

- **Use recommended protective clothing when giving care to a person ill with Ebola.** Protective clothing includes masks, gowns, and gloves. Clean or throw away items used to care for people sick with Ebola.
- **Practice frequent hand washing** when caring for a person suspected to be ill or to have died from Ebola.
- **Avoid contact with animals that might carry Ebola** in areas where it is present. This includes bats, forest antelope, gorillas, and chimpanzees. Avoid bushmeat prepared from sick animals.
- Ebola vaccine can protect against Ebola Zaire in people at high risk. There is currently no approved vaccine against Ebola Sudan.

For more information, see the World Health Organization Ebola Fact Sheet:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>

What regions have active Ebola outbreaks?

Outbreak locations change. You can check CDC's travelers page for up-to-date information. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

I am concerned for my family and friends in the affected region. What should I tell them about the disease?

- **Share facts with family and friends about the disease.** Share with them that sick people should go to a health center. There, healthcare workers have the equipment and training to safely care for them.
- **Encourage your family and friends to know ahead of time how to get to these clinics.** Clinics might be far from where family and friends live or may be in temporary structures.
- **Mourning family and communities need to find ways to care for the dead without directly handling the bodies.** This might be very hard to accept. Still, it is important.
- **Talk with family and friends about information they receive.** Correct wrong information if needed. Help them find answers to questions they still have.

We used to teach our communities about prevention when traveling to an affected region. What learning resources are available to share?

Take a look at these resources. The CDC's Ebola [communications resources](#) page has links to videos, infographics, fact sheets, and posters. Its Ebola [website](#) explains about Ebola prevention, symptoms and Ebola vaccine.

In the last three weeks I was in a country currently affected by Ebola. Now I feel sick. If I get sick with symptoms, such as a fever, what should I do?

The chance you have Ebola is low unless:

- You were recently in a region with an active Ebola outbreak., or
- You had direct contact with someone with Ebola and you believe that you might now have symptoms of Ebola.

If either of these is true, contact your local health department right away. Public health will help arrange for safe transport to see a healthcare provider. The healthcare provider can determine if you need testing for Ebola and find other possible causes of your illness.

What happens at the hospital?

If doctors think you might have Ebola, the hospital will provide you with the best care available.

- You can tell a healthcare provider about your symptoms and get a physical exam.
- Healthcare providers will probably recommend tests to help find out why you are sick. This might include an Ebola test.
- Healthcare providers take steps to prevent spread of the disease. Some of these may be frightening to patients. For instance, healthcare providers will wear head-to-toe protective equipment. They may also limit visits by family and friends. These steps are important to keep everyone safe. Healthcare providers will communicate with family members. They make every attempt to allow visits in safe conditions.

Do we have Ebola in the US? How about in Oregon?

Currently, there is no Ebola in the United States. We are not aware of anyone infected in the U.S. No one has ever been diagnosed with Ebola in Oregon.

No one has had Ebola testing in Oregon in over five years.

CDC recommends Ebola testing only in certain settings. They recommend it only for people who were likely exposed to the virus and who also have symptoms. Ebola testing is needed for people who have both of the following.

- [The person had possible exposure to Ebola](#) in the 21 days before getting sick.
- The person has fever, or one of these symptoms.
 - severe headache,
 - muscle pain.
 - vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain
 - unexplained bleeding

What plans are in place to stop Ebola from entering and spreading in Oregon?

The risk of Ebola disease here in Oregon is low. Ebola is a serious illness. Health officials want to stop Ebola outbreaks wherever they happen. This helps protect people living in the affected countries and Oregonians. The best way to stop these outbreaks is to get needed resources to the source of infection. Teams from CDC and WHO regularly work with affected countries to do this.

International airports in Oregon and Washington have plans to help prevent spread of illnesses. Airport workers have a role in keeping diseases like Ebola from entering the country. They help recognize illnesses. Airports quickly notify CDC if any ill travelers arrive. Because these people know what to do when a traveler has an unusual illness, diseases don't have a chance to spread.

Public health contacts people who come to Oregon after visiting an Ebola-affected area. Public health talks to them about possible exposures. Travelers receive information and support. It helps ensure travelers know how to keep others safe. It also helps them get needed health care if they get sick with Ebola after arriving in Oregon.

Is there a vaccine against Ebola?

Yes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved an Ebola vaccine called Ervebo. This vaccine is given as a single dose. It is safe and protective against *Zaire ebolavirus*. This is the virus that has caused the largest and most deadly Ebola outbreaks to date. The vaccine is often used to help control outbreaks of Ebola infection. It is not effective against Ebola Sudan. There is currently no approved vaccine against that virus.

Public health [recommends](#) Ervebo vaccine for adults in the U.S. who could be exposed to *Zaire ebolavirus* at work. This includes adults who:

- Respond or plan to respond to an outbreak of Ebola Zaire.
- Laboratory workers or other staff at facilities in the U.S. that work with live Ebola Zaire virus.
- Healthcare staff working at designated [Ebola Treatment Centers](#) in the U.S.

To learn more about Ebola vaccine, visit [Ebola Vaccine: Information about Ervebo](#).

How effective is the vaccine? How long can the immunity from the vaccine last?

The Ebola vaccine is safe and effective. One study found it was 97% effective in preventing disease caused by *Zaire ebolavirus*. Another found it was 100% effective.

We don't know yet how long protection from the vaccine lasts. Work is underway to find out. New vaccines are being tested to protect against Ebola Sudan.

How is Ebola treated?

Basic care can greatly improve chances of survival when provided early. This type of care includes:

- Giving fluids and electrolytes (body salts) orally or by vein.
- Using medicine to support blood pressure, reduce diarrhea and vomiting, and manage fever and pain.
- Treating other infections if they occur.

There are also two treatments approved in the U.S. to treat Ebola infection caused by the *Zaire ebolavirus*. They are called Inmazeb and Ebanga. Both are proteins that help control the infection. These medicines do not help in Ebola

Sudan infections.

What is quarantine? What is isolation? What are activity limits?

Quarantine

Quarantine means that a healthy person who was exposed to a contagious disease stays away from others. This helps prevent possible spread of infection.

Isolation

Isolation means that an ill person with symptoms of a contagious disease stays away from others. This helps stop the spread of infection. Doctors and nurses use isolation routinely to prevent infections in healthcare workers and others.

Activity Limits

Activity limits help a person who has been exposed to a contagious disease protect others. They help the exposed person avoid getting ill in crowded settings. They might limit travel by avoiding long-distance trips or not using public transportation. They might involve staying home from work. Public health may ask some people who were exposed to Ebola to limit activities based on their risk.

Why do we think Ebola has increased over time?

The 2014-2016 outbreak was the biggest Ebola outbreak. It was the first time Ebola affected people in large cities. Many people there lived close together. This likely led to more people being in contact with a person sick with Ebola. If there are many people in crowded places, and some are sick with Ebola, this makes spread more likely.

In some countries, more people have moved into wilderness areas. Ebola infects some animals, like bats. When many people move into a new area, they might come in more contact with animals infected with Ebola or other diseases. This could make outbreaks among people more likely.

Have travel restrictions limited the exposure to Ebola in other regions? How would the ban lifting in the coming weeks affect those regions and the people traveling to other areas?

In recent outbreaks, there were no restrictions on travel between the U.S. and countries that currently had Ebola outbreaks. However, CDC advised avoiding non-essential travel to Ebola-affected districts. Travel advisories like this can help

reduce exposure to Ebola. This decreases the risk of importing the virus into countries that are not affected. The CDC Travel Advisory usually ends when the outbreak is over. It would not be needed then, since the risk of exposure to Ebola would be very low. Still, it is important to stay aware of illnesses, like Ebola and COVID-19. If communities recognize them early, they can take steps to prevent further spread and stop the outbreak.

Is there emergency funding to control outbreaks of Ebola or other illnesses?

Public health has funds to control outbreaks. We can also request funds, if needed, from the state Legislature. Public health has some funds supporting work with communities with ties to countries with Ebola outbreaks. This should help ensure that public health services are provided in an acceptable and respectful way.