

EBOLA HEALTH AND MONITORING FACTSHEET

Definition

Ebola virus disease (EVD), previously known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. Ebola can cause disease in humans and nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees).

The natural reservoir host of Ebola virus remains unknown. However, on the basis of evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe that the virus is animal-borne and that bats are the most likely reservoir.

Ebola viruses are found in several African countries. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically in Africa.

Transmission

Because the natural reservoir host of Ebola viruses has not yet been identified, the manner in which the virus first appears in a human at the start of an outbreak is unknown. However, researchers believe that the first patient becomes infected through contact with an infected animal.

Ebola is not spread through the air or by water, or in general, food. ***You are not at risk for Ebola infection unless you are in direct contact with bodily fluids of someone with Ebola while they have viral symptoms such as fever, vomiting, and cough.***

Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with any of the following:

- Blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, feces, vomit, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola.
- Objects (like needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus.
- Infected animals.

Family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients and health care providers caring for Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with infected blood or body fluids of sick patients. The virus can live on surfaces that are soiled with blood or other body fluids, but sterilizing hospital equipment with bleach kills Ebola.

During outbreaks of Ebola, the disease can spread quickly within healthcare settings (such as a clinic or hospital). Exposure to Ebola can occur in healthcare settings where hospital staff are not wearing appropriate protective equipment, including masks, gowns, and gloves and eye protection.

Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus. However, Ebola virus has been found in semen for up to 3 months. People who recover from Ebola are advised to abstain from sex or use condoms for 3 months.

Symptoms

The time it takes from exposure to Ebola to actually getting sick is anywhere from 2 to 21 days. Most people who are infected with Ebola will develop early symptoms eight to nine days after exposure to the virus.

Humans are not infectious until they develop symptoms.



Early symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, cough, stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. Because these could be symptoms of other diseases, it's difficult to diagnose Ebola early on. ***This is followed by vomiting, diarrhea, rash, symptoms of impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding (e.g. oozing from the gums, blood in the stools).***

Diagnosis

Diagnosing Ebola in a person who has been infected for only a few days is difficult, because the early symptoms, such as fever, are nonspecific to Ebola infection and are seen often in patients with more commonly occurring diseases, such as malaria, meningitis, and typhoid fever.

However, if a person has the early symptoms of Ebola and has had contact with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola, contact with objects that have been contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola, or contact with infected animals, they should be isolated and public health professionals notified.

Treatment

No specific vaccine or medicine (e.g., antiviral drug) has been proven to be effective against 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

An experimental treatment, ZMapp, is being developed for use with individuals infected with Ebola. It is too early to know whether ZMapp is effective, since it is still in an experimental stage and has not yet been tested in humans for safety or effectiveness.

Recovery from Ebola depends on the patient's immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years, possibly longer.

Vaccination

There is no FDA-approved vaccine available for Ebola.

Prevention / Action Plan

Awareness of risk factors for Ebola infection and protective measures that individuals can take is an effective way to reduce human transmission. Risk reduction measures include:

- Reducing the risk of human-to-human transmission from direct or close contact with people with Ebola symptoms, particularly with their bodily fluids. Gloves and appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn when taking care of ill patients at home. Regular hand washing is required after visiting patients in hospital, as well as after taking care of patients at home.
- Outbreak containment measures including, identifying people who may have been in contact with someone infected with Ebola, monitoring the health of contacts for 21 days, separating the healthy from the sick to prevent further spread, good hygiene and maintaining a clean environment, and prompt and safe burial of the dead.
- Monitor emergence of local Ebola cases to identify potential contact exposure. You must monitor. Firestorm has identified a series of triggers, in the public domain, that can be utilized to escalate Pandemic Stages, policies and procedures. **KNOWING WHEN TO TAKE ACTION IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF A COMMUNICABLE ILLNESS PLAN.**
- Prepare a Communicable Illness Plan for your school or business. Leadership is tasked with pandemic planning oversight, direction, execution, and response