

Questions and Answers about Ebola

The current Ebola outbreak centers on four countries in West Africa: Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, although further spread could occur to neighboring African countries. CDC is sending staff to the affected areas to help bring the outbreak under control. Ebola does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public, because of how the disease spreads.

What is Ebola?

- Ebola is a severe, often fatal disease caused by the Ebola virus. Symptoms appear within 21 days of exposure.
- People exposed to Ebola are not contagious unless they have symptoms of Ebola: fever, severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.

How does Ebola spread?

Ebola spreads through direct contact with

- an infected symptomatic person's blood or body fluids (such as saliva or urine).
- objects (such as needles) contaminated with infected secretions
- an infected animal, or by eating infected bushmeat.

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 contaminated food or water?

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

No. Ebola does not spread through water.

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 sick person with symptoms of Ebola.

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 in West Africa to prevent sick travelers from getting on planes. Also, airports in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone are screening all outbound passengers for Ebola symptoms. Passengers are required to respond to a health questionnaire. 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 is CDC doing in the United States?

CDC has protocols, professional staff, and a strong network of partners to protect against further spread of disease. Airlines report to CDC any sick passengers before arrival, and we work with partners at ports of entry to isolate sick travelers.

CDC provided guidance to airlines for managing ill passengers/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 suspected patients, and how they can protect themselves from infection.

For more information:

- Ebola updates: www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/
- Travelers' Health: www.cdc.gov/travel
- Airline guidance: www.cdc.gov/quarantine/air/managing-sick-travelers/ebola-guidance-airlines.html