

# EBOLA FACT SHEET

## What is Ebola?

Ebola, previously known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of 5 identified Ebola virus species. Ebola can cause disease in humans and nonhuman primates (such as monkeys). Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Who can get Ebola?

Anyone. However, health care workers providing care for Ebola patients and family and friends in close contact with infected persons are at highest risk for becoming infected.

## What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms of Ebola include fever, severe headache, diarrhea, weakness, fatigue, vomiting, unexplained bleeding or bruising, and abdominal (stomach) pain.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally begin anywhere from 2–21 days after exposure, but the average is 8–10 days.

## How is Ebola spread?

The virus is present in the body fluids of an infected person. Body fluids include blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, feces, sweat, tears, breast milk, urine, semen, and vaginal secretions. You can get Ebola if you are exposed to an infected person's body fluids through any of the following ways: 1) through your mouth, nose, or eyes, 2) through a break in your skin, or 3) through sexual contact. You may be exposed to the body fluids by splashes that create droplets or direct contact (such as touching a body fluid). Ebola is not spread through the air. However, in the health care setting, precautions are recommended to prevent transmission of the virus from patients sick with Ebola to health care workers and other patients or family members as a result of splashes or sprays of body fluids that contain the virus. A person

infected with Ebola can only spread the virus to others once symptoms begin.

## Is there a vaccine to prevent Ebola?

No. Currently there is no vaccine for Ebola. Experimental vaccines are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.

## How is Ebola treated?

Currently, there is no treatment for Ebola. Experimental treatments are currently being developed and tested. Treatment is supportive and based on a patient's clinical condition. Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive care and the patient's immune response.

## How can people protect themselves against Ebola?

If you travel to or are in an area affected by an Ebola outbreak, make sure to do the following: 1) wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds, 2) do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's body fluids (such as clothes and bedding), 3) avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola, 4) avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared from these animals, 5) avoid facilities where Ebola patients are being treated, and 5) monitor your health after you return for 21 days and seek medical attention immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola. Healthcare workers who may be exposed to patients with Ebola should wear appropriate personal protective equipment and practice proper infection control measures.

## Where can I get more information?

Information about Ebola and other related health topics can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit [www.doh.dc.gov](http://www.doh.dc.gov) or call (202) 442-9371.