

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE (EBOLA)

FACT SHEET

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. There are five identified Ebola virus species, four of which are known to cause disease in humans. 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.

How do People get Ebola?

The natural host of Ebola viruses has not yet been identified, so how the virus first appears in humans at the start of an outbreak is unknown. However, researchers believe that the first patient becomes infected through contact with an infected animal.

Ebola can only be spread from human to human after symptoms begin. Ebola is spread through direct contact (for example, through broken skin or mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, or mouth) with:

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

Ebola is **not** spread through the air, by water, or, in the United States, through food.

Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus. However, the Ebola virus has been found in semen for up to 3 months, so abstinence is recommended for 3 months after recovery.

What are the Symptoms of Ebola?

The symptoms of Ebola include:

- Fever (greater than 101.5°F)
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola, but the average is 8 to 10 days.

How is Ebola Diagnosed and Treated?

A laboratory test is required to diagnose Ebola. 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, they should be isolated until testing and evaluation can take place.

No FDA-approved vaccine or medicine is available for 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 (IV) fluids and balancing electrolytes (body salts)
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
- Treating other infections if they occur

Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.

Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive care and the patient's immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years.

Some people who have recovered from Ebola have developed long-term complications, such as joint and vision problems.



For more information on Ebola visit www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola or www.cchdmt.org or call CCHD at 454-6950 and ask to speak with a Public Health Nurse.