

## Ebola virus disease: Information to travellers

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### What is Ebola virus disease?

Ebola is a rare severe disease, often fatal, caused by the Ebola virus.

It is transmitted through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids (e.g. saliva, urine, vomit) from infected people, dead or alive. This includes unprotected sexual contact with patients up to three months after they have recovered.

You can also catch the disease from direct contact with blood and other bodily fluids from infected wild animals, dead or alive, such as monkeys, forest antelopes and bats.

After two days and up to 21 days following exposure to the virus, the disease may start suddenly with fever, muscle aches, weakness, headache and sore throat.

The next stage of the disease is characterised by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash and malfunction of the liver and kidneys. Some patients also have profuse internal and external bleeding and multi-organ failure.

There is no specific licensed vaccine or validated treatment for the disease.

### Risk of infection with Ebola virus and how to avoid it

Even if you are living in, or have travelled to, affected areas, the risk of infection with Ebola virus is extremely low, unless you have been directly exposed to bodily fluids of a dead or living infected person or animal. Contact with bodily fluids includes unprotected sexual contact with patients up to three months after they have recovered.

Casual contact in public places with people that do not appear to be sick does not transmit Ebola. You cannot contract Ebola virus by handling money, groceries or swimming in a pool. Mosquitoes do not transmit the Ebola virus. Ebola virus does not transmit through the air as influenza does.

Ebola virus is easily killed by soap, bleach, sunlight, and high temperature or drying. Machine washing clothes that have been contaminated with fluids will destroy Ebola virus. Ebola virus survives only a short time on surfaces that are in the sun or have dried. It can survive for a longer time on clothes or materials which have been stained with blood or other bodily fluids.

There is a risk of transmission of Ebola through contact with utensils or contaminated material in healthcare settings if the correct infection control procedures are not properly carried out.

### Outbreak in 2014

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The following information gives some advice for travellers arriving in, or departing from affected areas.

### Advice to people arriving in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria

In the event of travel to the affected countries the following preventive measures should eliminate the risk of getting infected:

- Avoid direct contact with blood or bodily fluids of a patient or a corpse and with objects possibly contaminated.
- Avoid contact with wild animals, alive or dead, and consumption of 'bush meat'.
- Avoid having unprotected sexual intercourse.
- Avoid habitats which might be populated by bats, such as caves, isolated shelters, or mining sites.
- Wash hands regularly, using soap or antiseptics.

You should be aware that there is an increased risk of infection in healthcare facilities. It is therefore prudent to:

- Identify appropriate in-country healthcare resources, through local business contacts, friends or relatives;
- Ensure that, in the event of any illness or accident, medical evacuation is covered by travel insurance, to limit exposure in local health facilities.

In addition, you should consult the advice provided by national authorities on travel to the affected countries.

### Advice to people departing from Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone

The risk that you have been exposed to the Ebola virus is extremely low.

However, if you develop fever, unexplained fatigue, diarrhoea or any other severe symptoms (e.g. vomiting, unexplained haemorrhage, severe headache) in the few weeks following a departure from a tropical area, you should:

- **Seek rapid medical attention mentioning your travel history**, since it may result from an infection like malaria that requires immediate investigation and treatment.

If you have been directly exposed to any bodily fluids from a dead or living infected person or animal, including unprotected sexual contact with patients that have recovered, you should:

- **Seek rapid medical attention mentioning your travel history.**
- **Contact the medical care facility by phone before your visit**, in order to enable medical personnel to use appropriate protection at the time of admission.

Please be aware that the World Health Organization has recommended that affected states should conduct exit screening for unexplained illness consistent with potential Ebola virus infection and that Ebola cases or contacts should not undertake international travel, unless the travel is part of an appropriate medical evacuation.