Indiana State Department of Health
Epidemiology Resource Center

EVD Outbreak: Frequently Asked Questions

Right now, there is a large Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak occurring in four West African countries – Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Nigeria. No one has contracted EVD in the United States or in Indiana. No person-to-person spread of the virus has ever been documented in the United States.

What is EVD?

- EVD is caused by the Ebola virus. It affects many of the body's organ systems and often causes severe illness.
- Symptoms of EVD most commonly start 8-10 days after coming into contact with Ebola virus but can occur as early as 2 days to up to 21 days after exposure. Symptoms include:
    - Fever
    - Headache
    - Joint and muscle aches
    - Weakness
    - Diarrhea
    - Vomiting
    - Stomach pain
    - Lack of appetite
    - Abnormal bleeding

- EVD is a serious disease with a high fatality rate. Unfortunately, there are no available medications to cure EVD, and there is no vaccine or medicine to prevent EVD.

How is the Ebola virus spread?

- The Ebola virus is spread by direct contact with blood or other body fluids (such as: vomit, diarrhea, urine, breast milk, sweat, semen) of an infected person who has symptoms of EVD or who has recently died from EVD.

- It can also be spread on objects or surfaces contaminated by body fluids of an infected person, for example clothing or bedding of an ill person that have not been cleaned.
- The virus can only be spread from one person to another when someone has symptoms.
- **The virus is not spread through food, water, or the air.**
- **The virus is not spread through casual contact such as shaking hands.**
- In some circumstances, the virus may also be spread from sick or dead wild animals. It is not known for sure which wild animals carry the virus, but it has been found in bats and primates.
- In countries where EVD is occurring, avoid contact with sick or dead wild animals. Do not eat wild animals or bush meat.

Who can spread the Ebola virus to others?

- For a person to spread the Ebola virus to others, they must have:
    - Been in an area where an EVD outbreak is occurring,
      AND
    - Been in contact with the blood or body fluids (such as: vomit, diarrhea, urine, breast milk, sweat, semen) of a person with EVD or fluids from the body of one who has died from EVD,
      AND
    - Developed EVD symptoms

Who is at risk?

- The risk of catching EVD in the general public is extremely low.
- There has not been any transmission of EVD in the United States.
- The Ebola virus is not spread by casual contact with someone who has traveled to countries in West Africa with EVD outbreaks.
- Health care providers or family members caring for a person with EVD are at highest risk because they may come in contact with blood or body fluids.

What is being done to prevent EVD in Indiana?

- The risk of EVD being spread in Indiana remains extremely low.
- Since the start of the outbreak, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) has sent health alerts to health care providers with information on symptoms to watch for in patients who have recently traveled to West Africa.

What would we do if there was a case of EVD in Indiana?

- Systems are in place to identify suspected cases of EVD.
- The person with EVD would be isolated and cared for at a hospital. Hospitals are well equipped to care for a person with EVD by following infection control procedures.

How are hospitals properly equipped to deal with EVD?

- Hospital staff routinely follows procedures to prevent infections such as wearing gloves, gowns, masks, and other protective gear when caring for patients so that they don't come in contact with blood or other body fluids. These same procedures would be very carefully followed if they were caring for a patient with EVD in the United States.

Is it safe to travel overseas?

- Yes. It is safe to travel overseas.
- CDC has recommended that people not travel to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea where EVD outbreaks are occurring unless it's essential, such as providing humanitarian aid work in response to this EVD outbreak.
- CDC currently recommends that travelers to Nigeria take additional steps to protect themselves (e.g., avoiding contact with blood and body fluids of people who are ill with EVD)
- CDC has procedures in place to try to prevent ill passengers from getting on a plane in West Africa. CDC also has protocols if an ill passenger were to travel to the United States.
- If you are planning to travel outside the United States:
    - Discuss your travel plans with your health care provider before you go.
    - Check the CDC Traveler's Health website for updates on travel notices for specific diseases and countries: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices
- After you return from a trip outside the United States:
    - Call your doctor or clinic right away if anyone gets a fever, headache, joint and muscle aches within three weeks of returning home.
    - Tell your doctor where you traveled, what you did, and if you had contact with anyone who had EVD.

Should I avoid contact with a relative/co-worker/classmate/neighbor that recently traveled to West Africa?

- No. You do not need to avoid contact with someone who has recently traveled to a country where an EVD outbreak is occurring.
- EVD is spread through direct contact with blood or body fluids. It is only spread when a person is showing symptoms.
- Although there are no EVD cases in Indiana, it's always a good idea to avoid contact with another person's blood. People who work in health care settings or other occupations that may come into contact with blood or other body fluids should be properly trained.
- If a person who recently traveled to West Africa has symptoms of EVD (including fever) they should contact their health care provider and tell them about their travel history. Their health care provider will evaluate their risk for EVD as well as other more common infections of West Africa such as malaria and typhoid.

Does the Ebola virus stay in the body after a patient has recovered?

- No. In general, the virus does not stay in the body after a patient has fully recovered.
- The virus has been found in semen and breast milk for longer periods of time. Persons who are recovering need to take some additional steps so that others are not exposed to these fluids.

If a person recovers from EVD, are they immune to it?

- Recovery from EVD depends on a person's development of an immune response. Evidence demonstrates that people who recover from EVD develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years, possibly longer. It is still unknown if people who survive are immune for life.

How do you treat EVD?

- There is no medication to cure EVD and no vaccine to prevent it.
- Treatment for EVD is supportive, meaning providing fluids, maintaining blood pressure, replacing lost blood.
- Seeking health care as soon as symptoms appear increases the chances of surviving. It also prevents other people from getting infected because they will not come into contact with blood and body fluids of infected people.

What can we expect in the near future?

- It will take time for the EVD outbreak to be controlled in West Africa.
- Health care providers continue to follow standard practices so they do not come in contact with blood or body fluids of sick patients. They are also asking sick patients about recent travel to make sure they can rule out Ebola.
- ISDH will continue to monitor the outbreaks, work with partners such as CDC, and provide updates to the public and health care providers as needed.

Where can I get more information?

Information about EVD

- ISDH website: http://www.in.gov/isdh/26447.htm
- CDC website: www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola

Travel notices and recommendations

- CDC website: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/
- WHO website: www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/

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