Ebola Virus Disease (EVD): Frequently Asked Questions
January 13, 2015

SUMMARY
• There is a large Ebola outbreak occurring in West Africa.
• No one has contracted Ebola disease in Alaska.
• Ebola is not spread through food (except infected bush meat), water, or the air. It is only spread through direct contact with blood or body fluid of a person with symptoms of Ebola or who has died from Ebola.

What is Ebola?
• Ebola is caused by the Ebola virus. It affects many of the body’s organ systems and often causes severe illness.
• Symptoms of Ebola most commonly start 8-10 days after coming into contact with Ebola virus but can occur as early as 2 days, or as late as 21 days after exposure.
• Symptoms include:
  o Fever
  o Headache
  o Joint and muscle aches
  o Weakness
  o Diarrhea
  o Vomiting
  o Stomach pain
  o Lack of appetite
  o Abnormal bleeding
• Ebola is a serious disease with a high fatality rate. Unfortunately, there are no available medications to cure Ebola, and there is no vaccine or medicine to prevent Ebola.

How is Ebola spread?
• Ebola 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 Ebola or who has recently died from Ebola.
• Those fluids must have an entry point, like a cut or a scrape or someone touching the nose, mouth, or eyes, with contaminated hands, or being splashed.
• 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 appropriately.
• Ebola is not spread through food (except in infected bush meat), water, or the air.
• Ebola is not spread through casual contact.
• In some circumstances, Ebola may also be spread from sick or dead wild animals. It is not known for sure which wild animals carry Ebola, but it has been found in bats, monkeys, and apes.
• In countries where Ebola is occurring, avoid contact with sick or dead wild animals. Do not eat wild animals or bush meat.
Who can spread Ebola to others?
- For a person to spread Ebola to others, they must have:
  - Been in an area within the last 21 days where Ebola disease 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 Ebola or who has died from Ebola, AND
  - Developed Ebola symptoms.

When can Ebola be spread to others?
- For a person to spread Ebola to others, they must be showing symptoms.

Who gets tested when Ebola is suspected?
- Health care providers who suspect a case of Ebola would immediately contact the Section of Epidemiology for assistance with testing and case investigation.

How long does Ebola last outside the body?
- Ebola can survive from 1-2 days outside the body depending on things like temperature, humidity, pH, etc.
- Bleach and other hospital disinfectants kill Ebola.

If a person survives Ebola infection, are they immune to it?
- Yes, if a person has antibodies from a past Ebola infection, they would be protected from getting the same strain of Ebola virus again.

Does Ebola virus stay in the body after a patient has recovered?
- No. In general, Ebola does not stay in the body after a patient has fully recovered.
- Ebola 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.

How do you treat Ebola disease?
- There is no medication to cure Ebola and no vaccine to prevent it.
- Treatment for Ebola 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.

Who is at risk?

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

Widespread and intense transmission is currently occurring in the following countries: Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. From November 17 through January 6, a few cases occurred in Mali that were initially presumed to be limited but subsequent investigation yielded numerous contacts and prompted heightened screening. Once transmission associated with these cases ceased, Mali was removed from the list of nations of concern on January 7, 2015. In 2014, there were also a small number of cases reported in Nigeria and a single case reported in Senegal; however, these cases are considered to be contained, with no further spread in these countries.

What is being done to prevent Ebola in Alaska?

- Since the start of the outbreak, the Alaska Division of Public Health (DPH) has sent health alerts to health care providers with information on symptoms to watch for in patients who have recently traveled to West Africa.
- DPH has engaged in hospital grand rounds, interagency teleconferences with all stakeholders who may be involved in the care of an Ebola suspect, media interviews, and frequent and ongoing email and telephone consultations with stakeholders.
- DPH has created an updated Ebola website (http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/dod/ebola/) with relevant links and information, including printable posters that can be used in various settings.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) monitor international infectious diseases and have staff working in countries with Ebola to help control the spread of disease. DPH works closely with these organizations.
- CDC has worked with airlines to identify individuals who might become ill while traveling.

What would we do if there was a case of Ebola in Alaska?

- DPH, local public health, hospitals and clinics have systems in place to identify suspected cases of Ebola.
- The person would be isolated and cared for at a hospital.
- DPH and local public health agencies would conduct an immediate investigation of persons who may have been in contact with the suspected case.
• Hospitals in Alaska and across the U.S. are well equipped to care for a person with Ebola by following normal infection control procedures.
• CDC would be contacted and assist in consultation immediately through their emergency operations center.

How are hospitals properly equipped to deal with Ebola?
• Hospital staff routinely follows procedures to prevent infections such as wearing gloves, gowns, masks, and other protective gear, and using good hand washing practices, 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 Ebola in the United States.

Is it safe to travel overseas?
• CDC has recommended that people not travel to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea where Ebola outbreaks are occurring unless it’s essential, such as providing humanitarian aid work in response to this Ebola outbreak.
• 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:
  o Discuss your travel plans with your health care provider before you go.
  o Check the CDC Traveler’s Health website for updates on travel notices for specific diseases and countries: [http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/notices](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/notices)
• After you return from a trip outside the United States:
  o Call your doctor or clinic right away if anyone gets a fever, headache, joint and muscle aches within three weeks of returning home.
  o Tell your doctor where you traveled, what you did, and if you had contact with anyone who had Ebola.

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 Ebola outbreak is occurring.
• Ebola is spread through direct contact with blood or body fluids. It is only spread when a person is showing symptoms. Although there are no Ebola cases in Alaska, 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 Ebola (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 Ebola as well as other more common infections of West Africa such as malaria and typhoid.

**Should I avoid public transportation?**
- No. There is no reason to avoid public transportation or other public places.
- The risk of catching Ebola in the general public is extremely low.
- No one has contracted Ebola disease in Alaska.

**Can domestic pets get Ebola?**
- There is no evidence that pets become sick with Ebola from routine contact with people who are infected with the virus.
- There is no evidence that pets can transmit Ebola to humans through routine contact.

**What can we expect in the near future?**
- It will take time for the Ebola outbreaks 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.
- DPH 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 Ebola disease**

**Travel notices and recommendations**