

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a disease caused by virus. It affects humans and contracted from wild animals.

Where did the disease originate?

The origin of the virus that caused Ebola is unknown. But the first outbreak of the disease was recorded in 1976 in DRC and Sudan simultaneously.

How is the disease transmitted?

The disease is transmitted from person to person through contact with body fluids (Blood Serum), secretions (Saliva) and organs of infected animals including human being. Infection can also occur if broken skin or mucous membranes come into contact with infected soiled clothing bed linen or used needles.

What are the precautions to be taken when dealing with patients?

One must always use proper protective equipment when caring for patients.

What are typical signs and symptoms of infection?

Fever, weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. A rash, red eyes hiccups and bleeding from body openings may be seen in some patients.

When can someone seek medical care?

If one has been in an area known to have Ebola virus disease or in contact with a person suspected to have Ebola and they begin to have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately.

Can Ebola be treated?

There is currently no specific treatment to cure the disease; however some patients will recover with the appropriate medical care.

What are the prevention measures?

Raising awareness about the disease; nature, transmission and prevention. Some of the prevention measures include:

- Reducing contact with high-risk infected animals
- Animal products should be thoroughly cooked before eating
- Regular hand washing after visiting patients in the hospital or caring for someone at home is recommended
- Avoiding direct contact with body fluids of a person suffering from Ebola or a deceased patient by wearing gloves, goggles and masks when caring for an ill person
- Persons who died of Ebola must be handled using strong protective wear and buried immediately
- Suspected cases should be isolated from other patients (Quarantine)
- Disinfection of soiled clothing or bed linens from a patient with Ebola is required before handling these items.
- Raising awareness about Ebola in among affected communities

How should health workers protect themselves from risk of infection when caring for sick patients?

- Health workers should strictly apply recommended infection control measures to avoid exposure to infected blood, fluids or contaminated objects
- Use protective equipment and also avoid re-use of such equipment unless they have been properly disinfected
- Change gloves between caring for each patient
- Procedures that can expose health workers to infection should be carried out under strict safe conditions
- Infected patients should be isolated as much as possible

What about rumours that some food can prevent or treat the infection?

People are encouraged to seek credible health advice about Ebola virus disease from their public health authority.

What measures are taken during outbreaks?

WHO provides technical advice to countries and communities to prepare for and respond to Ebola outbreaks.

WHO actions include;

- Advice on prevention and treatment options
- Raising awareness of the nature of the disease and protective health measures to control transmission of the virus
- Deployment of experts and distribution of health supplies when requested by the country.
- Technical advice to investigate and contain health threats when they occur
- Disease surveillance and information-sharing across regions to watch for outbreaks.

Is it safe to travel during an outbreak?

The risk of infection for travelers is very low since person-to-person transmission results from direct contact with body fluids or secretions of an infected person.

Travelers are advised to avoid all contact with infected patient.