

Summary

The thought of a potentially-deadly virus being in our country can be frightening; however, it is important to remember that it's far easier to 'catch' a cold, the flu, or even measles than it is to contract Ebola.

You must come into direct contact with body fluids (blood, saliva, urine, feces, sweat, vomit, breast milk, semen) from a person who is **actively** exhibiting Ebola symptoms, or an object (such as syringes, bedding, or clothing) that are contaminate with such fluids. Further, the fluid can only enter your body via an open wound or through mucus membranes, such as in your mouth, nose, eyes, and vagina. (It is important to note that men can transmit Ebola through semen for up to seven weeks after they are symptom-free.)

As with other communicable diseases, prevention is the best medicine. Practice good hygiene - wash your hands thoroughly and often, especially if you may have come into contact with someone who has a communicable disease. If you are caring for someone with Ebola, **always** use protective gear. Be sure to cook meat thoroughly. Finally, if you believe you may have contracted Ebola, monitor your symptoms for 21 days; if you begin having symptoms, go to the emergency room immediately and tell them you may have come into contact with an Ebola patient. If you have no symptoms after 21 days, it is extremely unlikely you have Ebola.



Northwest Health Connections

247 Hospital Drive
Roseland Building
Warren, PA 16365

Phone: 814-728-9400

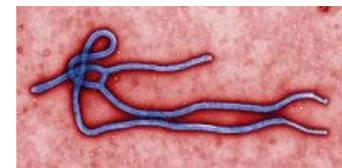
Fax: 814-728-8887

E-mail: info@northwesthc.org

Northwest Health Connections

A Division of  **milestone**
CENTERS FOR PEOPLE WITH BEHAVIORAL & INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES

The Ebola Virus What You Need to Know



Electron [micrograph](#) of an Ebola virus [virion](#)

A HealthCare Quality Unit

A Brief History

The recent Ebola Virus (also known as Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever) outbreak has generated world-wide concern as cases of it have been discovered outside the western African nations where it originated. The virus was first discovered in the area of the Ebola River in the nation of Congo. It is contagious among humans and certain mammals, and airline travel increases the likelihood of the disease spreading. At the time of this writing (October 2, 2014), one case has been noted in the United States. Ebola, if not treated, is fatal. It damages the immune system and depletes the number of blood-clotting cells in the body, resulting in internal and external hemorrhaging (bleeding), dehydration, and death.



How It's Spread

Ebola is spread by direct contact with the skin or bodily fluids of an infected person, or by touching contaminated needles or other contaminated objects. This is why caregivers of a person sick with Ebola (or who has died from it) are at greatest risk of becoming infected, whether they are family members, healthcare workers, or morticians.

Symptoms

Symptoms show up between 2 and 21 days after a person is infected and include: high fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, sore throat, weakness, stomach pain, and lack of appetite. As the disease progresses, it causes bleeding from the eyes, ears and nose, and can cause bloody vomiting and/or diarrhea, as well as a rash.

Since the aforementioned early symptoms of Ebola are similar to other diseases such as Influenza, Malaria, or Typhoid, diagnosing it can be tricky. A blood test called ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) is used in the early stages. Since it takes time for antibodies to form, they will not show up immediately, and so antibody testing usually will not confirm anything until later in the disease or after the patient has recovered.

Treatment

As of yet there is no vaccine and no cure for Ebola. Since it is a virus, antibiotics will not affect it, although they can be used to prevent opportunistic bacterial infections from occurring. Treatment consists of IV fluids and electrolytes, blood transfusions, oxygen, and medications to stabilize blood pressure. The most important thing we can do is *utilize precautions to prevent the disease from spreading.*



Prevention

CDC Recommendations:

- * Avoid direct contact with infected persons, their blood, or other body fluids
- * Avoid contact with objects that may have come in contact with an infected person or his body fluids
- * Avoid funeral rituals which require handling the body of a person who has died from the Ebola Virus
- * Avoid hospitals where persons with Ebola are being treated
- * Seek medical treatment immediately if symptoms appear
- * Wash your hands frequently

If you are a healthcare worker who may be exposed to persons with Ebola:

- * Wash your hands frequently
- * Wear protective clothing, including gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection
- * Isolate patients with Ebola from other patients
- * Avoid direct contact with bodies of people who have died from Ebola
- * Notify health officials if you have had contact with blood or other bodily fluids of persons infected with Ebola

To disinfect items or objects such as desktops, counters, and tables, a 10% bleach solution is effective, according to the CDC. Again, the best medicine is prevention. Use common sense and good judgment, and see a doctor immediately if you develop any symptoms.