

Public Health Hot Topic: Ebola Virus

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Ebola is a rare but deadly virus that causes bleeding inside and outside the body. As the virus spreads through the body, it damages the immune system and organs. Ultimately, it causes levels of blood-clotting cells to drop. This leads to severe, uncontrollable bleeding. The disease, also known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever or Ebola virus, kills up to 90% of people who are infected.

Could There Be an Outbreak in the U.S.?

Although movies and books describe major outbreaks of Ebola-like disease in the U.S., they're just fiction. So far serious Ebola cases have only shown up in Central and West Africa. The CDC says there's no significant risk of Ebola in the United States. It has strong safety measures in place for people who have Ebola and are brought to the U.S. for treatment.

Ebola can spread from country to country when people travel. So it is possible for it to reach the U.S. if an infected person travels here. But there are ways to prevent people from coming to U.S. airports with the disease. Airline crews are trained to spot the symptoms of Ebola in passengers flying from places where the virus is found. Crews are told to quarantine anyone who looks infected.

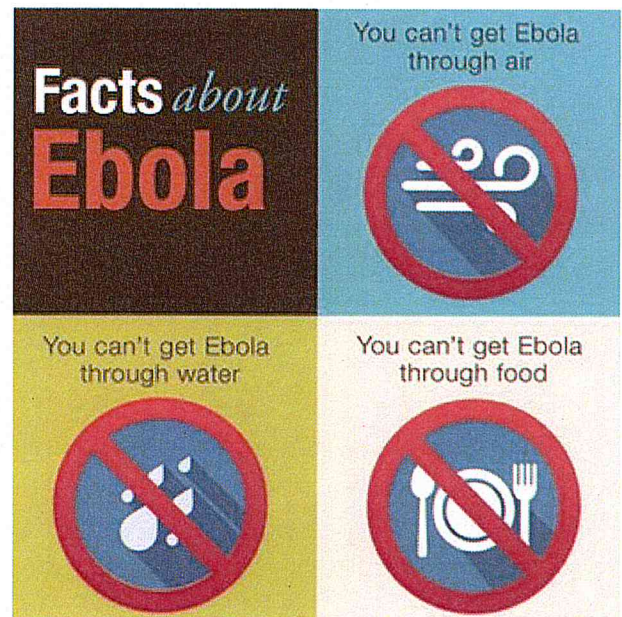
How Do You Get Ebola?

Ebola isn't as contagious as more common viruses like **colds**, influenza, or **measles**. It spreads to people by contact with the **skin** or bodily fluids of an infected animal, like a monkey, chimp, or fruit bat. Then it moves from person to person the same way. Those who care for a sick person or bury someone who has died from the disease often get it. Other ways to get Ebola include touching contaminated needles or surfaces. You can't get Ebola from air, water, or food. A person who has Ebola but has no symptoms can't spread the disease, either.

What Are the Symptoms of Ebola?

Early on, Ebola can feel like the flu or other illnesses. Symptoms show up 2 to 21 days after infection and usually include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Joint and muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Weakness



- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

As the disease gets worse, it causes bleeding inside the body, as well as from the [eyes](#), [ears](#) and nose. Some people will vomit or cough up [blood](#), have bloody [diarrhea](#), and get a [rash](#).

How Is Ebola Diagnosed?

Sometimes it's hard to tell if a person has Ebola from the symptoms alone. Doctors may test to rule out other diseases like [cholera](#) or [malaria](#). Tests of blood and tissues also can diagnose Ebola. If you have Ebola, you'll be isolated from the public immediately to prevent the spread.

How Is Ebola Treated?

There's no cure for Ebola, though researchers are working on it. Treatment includes an experimental serum that destroys infected cells.

- Doctors manage the symptoms of Ebola with:
- Fluids and electrolytes
- Oxygen
- Blood pressure medication
- Blood transfusions
- Treatment for other infections

How Can You Prevent Ebola?

There's no [vaccine](#) to prevent Ebola. The best way to avoid catching the disease is by not traveling to areas where the virus is found. Health care workers can prevent infection by wearing masks, gloves, and goggles whenever they come into contact with people who may have Ebola.

For more information on Ebola, please use the following resources:

[Guidelines for Evaluation of US Patients Suspected of Having Ebola Virus Disease](#)

[CDC West Africa Ebola Outbreak Press Release](#)

[CDC Ebola Outbreak Postings](#)

[A to Z Guide on Ebola Virus Infection](#)

[World Health Organization's Ebola Fact Sheet](#)