

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

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WHAT IS EBOLA?

Ebola virus disease (Ebola) is a deadly disease caused by infection with several species of orthoebolaviruses. Ebola can cause disease in humans, nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees) and bats.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

A person infected with Ebola virus is not contagious until symptoms appear. The virus spreads through direct contact with infected blood or body fluids entering the body through broken skin or the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Ebola can be transmitted through:

- Blood or body fluids, including faeces, saliva, sweat, urine, vomit, breast milk and semen, from someone who is sick with or has died from Ebola.
- Contaminated objects such as clothing, bedding, needles, or syringes.
- Infected animals, particularly fruit bats and nonhuman primates such as apes and monkeys.
- Semen from a man who has recovered from Ebola.
- Handling or consuming infected wildlife (bushmeat) in affected regions.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms may appear from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the virus, but the average is 8 to 10 days.

Signs and symptoms of Ebola include:

- fever
- severe headache
- fatigue
- muscle pain
- weakness
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- stomach pain
- unexplained bleeding or bruising

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN IF A PERSON IS SUSPECTED OF HAVING EBOLA?

If a person has symptoms of Ebola and there is reason to believe that Ebola should be considered:

- The patient should be transferred to the hospital using isolation precautions to avoid contact with blood or body fluids.
- The Emergency Department should be notified **prior to transfer**.
- In the hospital, strict isolation will continue.
- The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU) at the Ministry of Health must be notified.

WHAT TYPE OF TREATMENT AND CARE SHOULD BE GIVEN?

Standard treatment for Ebola is still limited to supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Health

WHO IS AT RISK FOR EXPOSURE TO EBOLA VIRUS?

Healthcare providers, family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with infected blood and body fluids. During outbreaks of Ebola, the disease can spread quickly within healthcare settings.

The most recent Ebola outbreak (2026) is in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda (Bundibugyo strain). Travelers could be infected if they come into contact with blood or bodily fluids from someone who is sick or has died from Ebola, infected wildlife, or meat from an infected animal.

HOW CAN EBOLA TRANSMISSION BE PREVENTED?

Healthcare workers, family or friends who may be exposed to people with Ebola should follow these steps:

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Practice proper infection control and sterilisation measures.
- Isolate patients with Ebola from other patients and people.
- Avoid direct contact with the bodies of people who have died from Ebola.
- Notify the ESU if you had direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of a person sick with Ebola.

Avoid nonessential travel to locations where an outbreak of Ebola is occurring. If you must travel, please make sure to do the following:

- Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid contact with blood and bodily fluids. Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or bodily fluids.
- Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared from these animals or meat from an unknown source.
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
- Monitor your health after you return for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola.

ARE THERE ANY VACCINES TO PREVENT EBOLA VIRUS?

While there are approved vaccines such as Ervebo and Zabdeno + Mvabea (Zaire strain). These vaccines DO NOT protect against all Ebola species. Currently there is no approved vaccine for the 2026 Bundibugyo strain.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BECOME ILL AFTER TRAVELLING TO A COUNTRY WHERE THERE IS AN OUTBREAK OF EBOLA VIRUS?

- Sick travelers should delay travel until cleared to travel by a doctor or public health authority.
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola up to 21 days after your return.
- Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the office or emergency room. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the office.

IS EBOLA A CONCERN FOR BERMUDA?

Bermuda's Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit actively monitors communicable diseases such as Ebola locally and globally. Monitoring of diseases allows for early detection, and a rapid coordinated public health response while keeping the public informed and protected through clear, proactive public-health guidance.

Currently, the risk of importation of Ebola to Bermuda remains low. However, as international travel can facilitate the spread of infectious diseases, preparedness measures are regularly reviewed. Residents should stay informed and follow recommended precautions, while public health authorities continue to monitor developments.

ADAPTED FROM:

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