

## **Ebola Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Ebola?**

Ebola viral disease is a severe, often fatal disease that affects humans and some animals (like monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees). It is caused by the Ebola virus.

### **How does Ebola spread?**

- Ebola virus is spread by **directly touching an infected person or animal's skin, blood or body fluids**. It cannot be spread simply by being near someone who is infected. Researchers believe that most Ebola outbreaks start when an animal carrying the Ebola virus infects a person, who can then infect other people.
- **Since the virus can survive on surfaces for a short period of time, people can be infected by touching objects (like needles or bed sheets) that contain infected blood or body fluids.**
- During outbreaks, the disease can spread quickly within health care settings if workers do not wear protective gear and take proper precautions.
- People only become contagious **after** they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.

### **What are the symptoms of Ebola?**

The disease usually starts with an abrupt fever, possibly with headache and joint and muscle aches. Other symptoms may include:

- Nausea
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

Some patients may also experience:

- Rash
- Red eyes
- Hiccups
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Chest pain
- Problems breathing
- Problems swallowing
- Bleeding inside and outside the body

### **When do symptoms first appear?**

Symptoms usually appear 8 to 10 days after exposure but may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure.

### **How serious is Ebola?**

The severity of the disease varies, but over 50% of patients with Ebola have died during past outbreaks. Researchers do not fully understand why some people who become sick with Ebola recover while others do not.

## Where has Ebola been reported?

In the current outbreak, nearly all confirmed Ebola cases have been reported from three African countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

**How is Ebola treated?** There is no known effective medication for Ebola infection. Treatment focuses on supportive care and may require intensive care unit support. There is no vaccine for Ebola.

**The NYSDOH is advising health care providers and facilities to consider the following:**

- **Increase vigilance in inquiring about a history of travel to West Africa** in the 21 days before illness onset for any patient presenting with fever or other symptoms consistent with EVD
- **Isolate** patients who report a travel history to an Ebola-affected country (currently Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea) and who are exhibiting EVD symptoms:
  - In a private room with a private bathroom
  - Implement Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions. Staff must use gowns, eye protection, gloves, and a facemask when caring for suspect patients. A respiratory protective mask is not required.
- Reporting of any suspect case(s) to any outside agency will be done by the Director/Infection Control.

Current information states that Ebola is not transmissible by the airborne route.

