

# Ebola Virus Disease

Update 10, November 2014

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Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a potentially severe illness caused by the Ebola virus. Early stages of the disease are characterized by fever, malaise and headache, which can progress to vomiting, diarrhea and in severe cases bleeding, organ dysfunction and death. Ebola is contracted through direct contact of the mucous membranes or non-intact skin with blood or body fluids from an infected person or animal. A number of outbreaks have been recorded in African countries since the mid-1970s, with the most recent serious outbreaks affecting Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia in Western Africa.

There are currently no reported Canadian cases related to this outbreak, although there are Canadians who are or have been participating in the response in affected countries. The risk to most travelers is considered low, but it is important to be on the lookout for illnesses compatible with EVD and remain vigilant for other illnesses prevalent in the region (e.g. Malaria, Typhoid, etc.).

Consider Ebola when there is a **history of travel to an affected area** (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia) within the last 21 days or **known contact with a patient diagnosed with Ebola** (eg, health care workers) **and** the symptoms listed below:

## What are the symptoms of Ebola?

**Symptoms can begin 2 to 21 days after exposure**

Initial symptoms include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle pain and weakness

Additional symptoms may include:

- Rash
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- Chest and abdominal pain
- Jaundice
- Swelling and pain in the stomach area
- Severe weight loss
- Delirium
- Shock
- Haemorrhaging (bleeding from inside and outside the body)

The incubation period for EVD is 2 -21 days. Patients are not infectious until they develop symptoms, most often fever.

Person-to-person transmission occurs through direct contact of the mucous membranes or non-intact skin with infected blood/body fluids including urine, vomitus and feces. Once symptoms appear the risk of transmission increases throughout the illness, particularly when the patient is vomiting, having diarrhea, or haemorrhaging. People are not infectious during the incubation period unless symptoms develop.

### **What should I do if I suspect a person may be at risk for EVD?**

All patients are screened by call takers either in Dispatch or the Patient Transfer Network to identify whether they are at risk of having Ebola (through travel to an affected country in West Africa or contact with a known case of EVD).

When attending a patient with a cough, vomiting or diarrhea, you should be following **routine practices and additional droplet precautions**:

- Wear **fluid repellent gown, double gloves, fit tested N95 mask and full face visor**
- Put a surgical mask on the patient

As part of your point-of-care risk assessment, if a patient has any of the above symptoms **ask for any travel history** to affected countries in West Africa or if they have had any contact with a symptomatic person suspected of having Ebola in the previous **21 days. If so**:

- **Leave the immediate area** – have the patient stay in a comfortable position then wait outside and minimize contact with others in the home while waiting for technical and medical advice.
- **Contact BCAS dispatch immediately for advice**
- **Do not administer nebulized therapy**
- **Avoid direct contact with the patient or with the patient's blood or body fluids**, including medical equipment such as needles which may be contaminated.

BCEHS is continuing to work on ways of minimizing potential exposure and will provide updates as available.

**More information** is available at the [Provincial Health Officer](#) website and the [Public Health Agency of Canada website](#).

#### **BCAS Dispatch Centre Numbers:**

Kamloops: 844-371-5140 (toll free), 250-371-5140 (local)

Vancouver: 844-408-7692 (toll free), 604-708-7692 (local)

Victoria: 855-915-2252 (toll free), 250-915-2252 (local)

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