

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

Frequently Asked Questions

Five Key Points:

1. The risk of getting sick with Ebola is very low in the U.S. and in LA County.
2. Ebola patients can only spread the disease when they have symptoms.
3. A person must have direct contact with a patient's body fluids to be infected.
4. To prevent the spread of Ebola, avoid contact with anyone who is sick with Ebola.
5. Public Health is taking safety measures to prevent its spread in LA County if a case were to come here.

What is Ebola?

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a rare disease caused by a virus (germ). This disease was first found in Africa. In 2014, the largest EVD outbreak (more disease than usual) in history was in West Africa caused by Ebola virus (species Zaire ebolavirus). In February 2021, outbreaks of Ebola virus disease (Zaire ebolavirus) were identified in the Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Currently, there is an ongoing EVD outbreak in Uganda which began in September 2022 caused by Sudan virus (species Sudan ebolavirus).

How does Ebola spread?

A person can only spread Ebola to other people after they develop signs and symptoms of EVD. Ebola virus spreads from person-to-person by direct contact with a patient's body fluids, like saliva, blood, vomit, urine, feces, and sweat. The virus gets into the body through broken skin or mucous membranes (spongy-like skin you find in your nose, eyes, or mouth). Ebola virus can also be spread by infected objects, like needles, that have been tainted with body fluids. Ebola virus can also spread after death, when preparing the patient's body for burial.

Ebola is not spread through casual contact, air, food or water, but rather through direct person-to-person contact with persons in the later stages of the disease. People with early symptoms of Ebola are not highly contagious.

Who is at risk for EVD?

The risk of catching Ebola virus in the general public is extremely low. Ebola is not spread by casual contact with someone who has traveled to countries in Africa with EVD outbreaks. A person cannot spread Ebola virus unless they are showing symptoms. Health care providers or family members caring for a person with Ebola are at highest risk because they may come in direct contact with blood or body fluids.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Headache	Stomach pain	Sore throat
Vomiting	Joint pain	Diarrhea
Muscle pain	Weakness	Abnormal bleeding
Fever	Loss of appetite	

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How is Ebola treated?

There are two treatments approved by FDA to treat Ebola, species Zaire ebolavirus, in adults and children. They are not approved for treatment of Sudan virus disease, and their clinical benefit for that disease, if any, is not known. Regardless of treatments available, supportive care, such as providing fluids, supportive medications and treating other infections can also help to improve chances of survival. Experimental vaccines and treatments are in development, and safety and efficacy testing is ongoing.

Are there vaccines to prevent EVD?

In the U.S. there is a vaccine approved for the Zaire ebolavirus species only available through the CDC and is recommended as pre-exposure prophylaxis vaccination for specific persons who are at potential occupational risk of exposure to Zaire ebolavirus (e.g. laboratorians working with Ebola virus, healthcare workers caring for EVD patients at designated Ebola treatment centers). The vaccine has been used to control EVD outbreaks in Africa. Currently there is no approved vaccine against the Sudan ebolavirus species.

What should travelers to Ebola affected areas do?

CDC issues travel notices to inform travelers and clinicians about current health issues that may impact travelers' health such as disease outbreak. Please refer to CDC website for more information including how travelers can prevent EVD.

What is the Department of Public Health doing to prevent Ebola in LA County?

To date, there have been no cases of Ebola in Los Angeles (LA) County. Public Health is working closely with the CDC and with the California Department of Public Health to monitor the health of travelers who have been in countries most affected by EVD outbreaks. We will continue to work with healthcare providers and hospitals to identify persons with EVD and take safety measures to prevent further spread if a case were to be identified in LA county.

For More Information:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/ebola.htm

California Department of Public Health

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/EbolaVirusDisease.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/about.html