

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Governor

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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

Ebola Virus Disease Fact Sheet

Ebola

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is one of the Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers. It is a severe, often fatal disease in humans and nonhuman primates (such as monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees). EVD is caused by infection with a virus of the family *Filoviridae*, genus *Ebolavirus*. There are five identified subspecies of *Ebolavirus*, four of the five have caused disease in humans; however, the natural reservoir host of ebolaviruses remains unknown. With available evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe the virus is zoonotic (animal-borne) with bats being the most likely reservoir. The first *Ebolavirus* species was discovered in 1976 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo near the Ebola River. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically.

Symptoms of Ebola

When infection occurs, [symptoms](#) usually begin abruptly. Symptoms of EVD typically include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and lack of appetite. Some patients may experience the following: rash, red eyes, hiccups, cough, sore throat, chest pain, difficulty breathing and swallowing and bleeding inside and outside of the body. Severe forms of the disease may include hemorrhagic symptoms and multi-organ dysfunction, leading to shock, and death. The most common occurrence of signs of infection is 8 to 10 days, while symptoms may appear 2 to 21 days after exposure.

Transmission

When an infection does occur in humans, there are several ways in which the virus can be transmitted to others. These include:

- Direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected ill person
- Exposure to objects (such as needles) contaminated with infected secretions
- Participation in funeral rites that includes direct exposure (contact) to human remains in the geographic area where the outbreak is occurring

EVD is often spread through close contact with infectious secretions when caring for ill persons. In order for the virus to be transmitted, an individual would have to have direct contact with an individual who is currently experiencing symptoms or with their bodily secretions.

Ebola Outbreaks

In outbreak settings, Ebola virus is typically initially spread to humans after contact with infected wildlife and is then spread person-to-person through direct contact with bodily fluids. The incubation period is usually 8–10 days (ranges from 2–21 days). Patients can transmit the virus through all stages of the illness, including postmortem (after death), if a person comes in contact with the body during funeral preparations.

During outbreaks of EVD, those at highest risk include health care workers and the family and friends of an infected individual. The disease can spread quickly within healthcare settings due

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to the level of exposure and lack of infection control precautions in many developing countries. Precautions should be taken to limit virus transmission, through adequate sterilization of instruments and wearing appropriate protective equipment, such as masks, gowns and gloves. As of August 2014, according to the World Health Organization, a total of 1,603 cases and 887 deaths had been reported across the three affected countries. This is the largest outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) ever documented and the first recorded in West Africa.

Treatment

Treatment is currently limited to supportive therapy, consisting of balancing the patient's fluids, maintaining their oxygen and blood pressure levels, and treating any complicating infections. Timely treatment of EVD is challenging due to the difficulty of diagnosing a patient in the early stages of infection. Early symptoms such as headache and fever are nonspecific to ebolaviruses, which may cause cases to be initially misdiagnosed. However, if a person has early [symptoms](#) of EVD and there is reason to believe EVD should be considered (such as recent travel to West Africa), the patient should be isolated and public health professionals notified. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends isolation and infection control procedures.

Prevention

Prevention of EVD presents many challenges, early recognition and identification of patients with potential Ebola is critical. When cases of Ebola do appear, healthcare workers must be able to recognize a case of EVD employ practical isolation precautions or barrier nursing techniques. The aim of these techniques is to avoid contact with the blood or secretions of an infected patient. If a patient with EVD dies, it is equally important that direct contact with the body of the deceased patient be prevented.

A few established primary prevention measures include:

- Patient placement
- Healthcare provider protection
- Environmental infection control

Additional Resources

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>

The World Health Organization (WHO): <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/> and <http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/en/>

The CDC, in conjunction with the WHO, has developed a set of guidelines to help prevent and control the spread of Ebola VF which results in EVD. [Infection Control for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers In the African Health Care Setting](#), the manual describes how to:

- Recognize cases of viral hemorrhagic fever (such as Ebola VF)
- Prevent further transmission in health care setting by using locally available materials and minimal financial resources.