

Know the FACTS

Ebola

Ebola virus disease is caused by a group of viruses known as orthoebolaviruses (formerly ebolavirus) and named after a river in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it was first recognized. Ebola can cause serious illness that may lead to death. In the United States, sick patients, healthcare providers and family caregivers face the highest risk of infection.

How Ebola Spreads

People can be exposed to Ebola through direct contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person, or through contact with contaminated objects such as needles. Ebola most often spreads when family members or healthcare workers care for someone who is sick without proper infection control measures. A person can only spread Ebola after symptoms begin.

Ebola does not spread through the air like the flu or COVID-19. **You cannot get Ebola from casual contact**, such as passing someone in public. Though it is rare, people can become infected through contact with infected animals, particularly bats and non-human primates. Outbreaks have been linked to handling infected wildlife and exposure in healthcare settings without proper infection control.



Ebola virus under a microscope.

Ebola symptoms

Symptoms of Ebola can appear 2-21 days after exposure to the virus, though most people develop symptoms 8-10 days after exposure. A person with Ebola is not contagious until symptoms begin. **Anyone who believes they were exposed to Ebola and who develops symptoms should contact a healthcare provider or public health department immediately.**

Early symptoms ("dry" symptoms) may include:

- fever
- severe headache
- muscle and joint aches
- abdominal pain
- loss of appetite
- weakness and fatigue

As the illness progresses, people may develop more severe ("wet") symptoms, including:

- nausea and vomiting
- diarrhea
- unexplained bleeding or bruising

Other symptoms may include chest pain, shortness of breath, confusion, red eyes, sore throat, rash, or seizures. Some Ebola survivors experience long-term health effects.



Ebola Strains That Cause Human Illness

Ebola virus disease is caused by a group of viruses known as orthoebolaviruses. There are six known orthoebolavirus species. Four of those cause illness in humans:

- **Ebola virus** (species *Orthoebolavirus zairense*) causes Ebola virus disease.
- **Sudan virus** (species *Orthoebolavirus sudanense*) causes Sudan virus disease.
- **Tai Forest virus** (species *Orthoebolavirus taiense*) causes Tai Forest virus disease.
- **Bundibugyo virus** (species *Orthoebolavirus bundibugyoense*) causes Bundibugyo virus disease.

Ebola Treatment

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved two medications to treat Ebola caused by the Zaire ebolavirus strain in adults and children. In addition to these treatments, patients have a much better chance of surviving if they receive:

- fluids and electrolytes given by mouth or through a vein (IV).
- medications to support blood pressure and manage fever, pain, vomiting and diarrhea.
- treatment for other infections that may occur.

Ebola Prevention

Avoid contact with the following:

- Blood and other body fluids (including urine, feces, saliva, sweat, vomit, breast milk, amniotic fluid, semen and vaginal fluids) from people who are sick with Ebola.
- Contaminated items such as clothing, bedding, needles or medical equipment used on a person who was sick with Ebola.
- Fluids from the body of someone who is suspected or confirmed to have died from Ebola, including during funeral or burial practices.
- Animals such as bats, forest antelopes, and non-human primates, as well as raw meat or fluids from these or unknown animals.

Additional Resources

- **Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC):** cdc.gov/ebola
- **Ohio Department of Health:** bit.ly/ODHEbola
- **National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC):** bit.ly/NETEC-Ebola

