Frequently Asked Questions regarding Ebola

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a severe, infectious, often-fatal disease caused by infection with the Ebola virus. The virus is transmitted through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected symptomatic person or through exposure to objects that have been contaminated with infected blood or bodily fluids.

What does “direct contact” mean?

Direct contact means that body fluids (blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, semen or feces) from an infected person have touched someone’s eyes, nose, or mouth or an open cut, wound, or abrasion.

Can Ebola spread by coughing? By sneezing?

Ebola is transmitted by direct contact with body fluids of a person who has symptoms of Ebola disease. Although coughing and sneezing are not common symptoms of Ebola, if a symptomatic patient with Ebola coughs or sneezes on someone, and saliva or mucus come into contact with that person’s eyes, nose or mouth, these fluids may transmit the disease.

How long does Ebola live outside the body?

Ebola is killed with hospital-grade disinfectants (such as household bleach). Ebola dried on surfaces such as doorknobs and countertops can survive for several hours; however, virus in body fluids (such as blood) can survive up to several days at room temperature.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Signs and symptoms include sudden onset of:

- fever
- weakness
- severe headache
- muscle pain
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- stomach pain
- rash
- unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Signs and symptoms may appear anywhere from 2-21 days after exposure to Ebola.

**I don’t feel well. How do I know if I have Ebola or the flu?**

Seasonal Influenza (flu) symptoms and Ebola symptoms are very similar. However, of these two viruses, your symptoms are most likely caused by seasonal influenza. Influenza is very common. Millions of people are infected, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized and thousands die from flu each year. In the United States, fall and winter is the time for flu. It is important to receive a flu shot every year during flu season. Flu shots are available at UH Health Center. It is usually not possible to determine whether a patient has seasonal influenza or Ebola infection based on symptoms alone. However, there are tests to detect seasonal influenza and Ebola infection. Your doctor will determine if you should be tested for these illnesses based on your symptoms, clinical presentation and recent travel or exposure history.

Infographic: [http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/is-it-flu-or-ebola.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/is-it-flu-or-ebola.pdf)

**What do I do if I’m traveling to one of the affected areas of outbreak? How can it be prevented?**

- Practice good hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid contact with blood and body fluids.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids (such as clothes, bedding, needles, and medical equipment).
- Avoid all contact with blood and body fluids of infected people or animals.
- There’s no vaccine to prevent Ebola. The best way to avoid catching the disease is by avoiding body fluids of an infected person.
• If you lived in, visited, or stayed in the areas where Ebola cases have been recently reported, seek medical attention if you feel sick with any of the symptoms listed above and inform your health care provider about your recent travel and potential contacts.

What do I do if I’m returning to the U.S. from an area where the outbreak is occurring?

All air travelers entering the United States who have been in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Mali are being routed through five U.S. airports (New York’s JFK International, Washington-Dulles, Newark, Chicago-O’Hare, and Atlanta) for enhanced entry screening.

These inbound travelers receive Check and Report Ebola (CARE) Kits that contain further information about Ebola. This kit includes a health advisory infographic about monitoring for Ebola symptoms for 21 days, pictorial description of symptoms, a thermometer with instructions for how to use it, a symptom log, and a wallet-sized card that reminds travelers to monitor their health and provides information about who to call if they have symptoms. Travelers entering the United States from Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali will be actively monitored by the local health department. Active monitoring means that public health workers are responsible for checking at least once a day to see if people have fever or other Ebola symptoms. Additional public health actions may be recommended depending on travelers’ possible exposures to Ebola while in one of the four countries.

Stay up-to-date in information related to the recent Ebola outbreak by visiting www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html