

Facts About Ebola¹

What is Ebola, and how is it transmitted? Ebola is a virus of the family *Filoviridae*, genus *Ebolavirus* that was discovered in 1976. Ebola can be transmitted only when you have direct contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person (alive or dead). Ebola is not spread through the air or by water, or in general, in food.

What is “direct contact” with a person who has Ebola? Direct contact is when your eyes, nose, mouth, or broken skin come into contact with an infected person’s (alive or dead) body fluids. This also includes coming into contact with objects that have the virus (e.g., needles, syringes).

What are body fluids? Does this include coughing and sneezing? Body fluids include saliva, mucus, vomit, feces, sweat, tears, breast milk, urine, and semen. Coughing and sneezing are not recognized as common symptoms of those infected with Ebola. But if saliva or mucus from someone infected with Ebola comes into contact with another person’s nose, eyes, or mouth, then it could carry the virus.

Does the Ebola virus live a long time outside the body? Ebola is killed with hospital-grade disinfectants, including household bleach. Ebola on dried surfaces such as doorknobs and countertops can survive for several hours. The Ebola virus in body fluids can survive up to several days at room temperature.

What can I do now to prevent the spread of Ebola? Each person must practice common hygiene prevention including careful hand washing or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid direct contact with persons who have symptoms of disease. Avoid nonessential travel to the African countries under a U.S. Travel Notice (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/ebola). Call your physician if you develop a fever along with other symptoms of disease. If you really want to prevent the spread of infection, get your flu shot, and stay home if you’re sick.

Where can I get more information about Ebola?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at:

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

www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/ebola-factsheet.pdf

Texas Department of State Health Services at www.dshs.state.tx.us/

Dallas County Medical Society at

www.dallas-cms.org/community_health/ebola.cfm

Texas Medical Association at www.texmed.org/ebola

1. From www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/; accessed Oct. 2, 2014.