

## Questions and Answers about Ebola

### 1. What is Ebola?

Ebola, also known as Ebola virus disease, is a rare and serious disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains (Zaire, Sudan, Bundibugyo, or Tai Forest virus). Ebola viruses are found in several African countries. Ebola was discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically in several African countries.

### 2. What are the signs and symptoms of Ebola?

Signs and symptoms of Ebola include fever, severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising. Signs and symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola, although 8 to 10 days is most common.

### 3. How is Ebola spread?

The virus is spread through **direct contact** with blood and body fluids (urine, feces, saliva, vomit or semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola, or with objects (like needles) that have been contaminated with the virus. The virus enters through broken skin or mucous membranes. Ebola is not spread through the air or by water or, in general, by food.

### 4. Can I get Ebola from a person who's infected but doesn't have fever/symptoms?

No. A person infected with Ebola is not contagious until symptoms appear. A person becomes increasingly infectious as the symptoms worsen.

### 5. What should I do if I think I've been in contact with someone who has Ebola?

To reduce the risk of exposure for others in your community, **call HealthLine 811** first for advice. They will ask you questions, and if appropriate, contact the local Medical Health Officer about further steps.

### 6. What happens after I call HealthLine?

The Medical Health Officer will ask you a series of questions, and may consult with an infectious disease specialist. Together, they'll determine the best way to ensure you receive appropriate care. Depending on the assessment made by the physicians, an ambulance may be sent to take you to Regina or Saskatoon for further evaluation and treatment. The ambulance personnel would be wearing Personal Protective Equipment in order to keep themselves safe while they transport you.

### 7. Why can't I just go see my family doctor or nurse practitioner?

Medical offices or clinics often have patients waiting to see a health care provider, as well as staff working in the location. To reduce any risk of exposing other people, it is best to call HealthLine first.

### **8. Why can't I just go to the Emergency Department at the hospital?**

Hospital emergency departments often have people waiting to be seen, as well as staff caring for patients. To keep both you and others safe, it is best to **call HealthLine at 811**; they can help make sure you receive appropriate information and care.

### **9. Why would patients be taken only to Regina or Saskatoon?**

All provinces have designated hospitals for the care and treatment of patients who are suspected of – or who may have – Ebola. Saskatchewan has designated Regina General Hospital and St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon, should the need arise. These facilities are best positioned to provide the care patients would need.

### **10. Who is most at risk of getting Ebola?**

Healthcare providers and other volunteers caring for Ebola patients are at most risk. Family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are also at high risk of getting sick because they may come in direct contact with the body fluids of sick patients.

### **11. Can Ebola be spread through mosquitoes?**

There is no evidence that mosquitoes or other insects can transmit Ebola virus. Only certain mammals (for example, humans, bats, monkeys and apes) have shown the ability to spread and become infected with Ebola virus.

### **12. How is Ebola treated?**

No specific vaccine or medicine has been proven to cure Ebola, although experimental treatments are under review. Signs and symptoms of Ebola are treated as they appear. The following basic interventions, when used early, can increase the chances of survival.

- Providing fluids and electrolytes
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
- Treating other infections if they occur

Early recognition of Ebola is important for providing appropriate patient care and preventing the spread of infection. Healthcare providers should be alert for and evaluate any patients who have a travel history and symptoms that could be compatible with Ebola.

### **13. How do I protect myself against Ebola if I travel to one of the affected countries?**

In early September the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development issued an advisory against all non-essential travel to the affected areas and recommended Canadians in those countries leave by commercial means.

If you are traveling to an area affected by the Ebola outbreak, protect yourself by registering with the Canadian Embassy/Consulate. They may also be able to provide you with information on care centers or hospitals should you need them.

Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever and any of the other following symptoms: headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, or unexplained bruising or bleeding.

### **14. What do I do if I'm returning from West Africa where there is widespread transmission?**

After you return, pay attention to and monitor your health for 21 days. **Call HealthLine at 811** immediately if you develop fever or any of the following symptoms: headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, or unexplained bruising or bleeding.

HealthLine has established protocols to assess your health and will consult with Public Health Officials to ensure appropriate interventions are provided for you.

If you cannot call **HealthLine at 811** and intend to visit a primary health care clinic or Emergency Department, **call in advance**. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. Advance notice will help them to care for you and protect other people who may be in the office or Emergency Department.

**15. Are there any cases of people contracting Ebola in the U.S. or in Canada?**

No confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Canada.

The United States had one imported case as of October 29, 2014 and has treated returning health providers and volunteers as well as healthcare workers who treated the imported case.

**16. If someone survives Ebola, can he or she still spread the virus?**

Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus. However, Ebola virus has been found in semen, so people who recover from Ebola are advised to abstain from sex, or use condoms for three months.

**Additional information can be found at the following websites:**

**Public Health Agency of Canada**

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/ebola/index-eng.php>

**U.S. Center for Disease Control**

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>

**World Health Organization**

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>

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