

What is Ebola virus disease?

Ebola is a severe, often fatal illness, with a death rate of up to 90 per cent. The illness affects humans as well as primates, including monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees.

How do people become infected with the virus?

Ebola is transmitted through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals.

In Africa infection in humans has happened as a result of contact with chimpanzees, gorillas, fruit bats, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines found ill or dead in the rainforest.

Once a person becomes infected, the virus can spread through contact with a sufferer's blood, urine, saliva, stools and semen. A person can also become infected if broken skin comes into contact with a victim's soiled clothing, bed linen or used needles.

Men who have recovered from the disease, can still spread the virus to their partner through their semen for seven weeks after recovery.

Who is most at risk?

Those at risk during an outbreak include:

- health workers
- family members or others in close contact with infected people
- mourners with direct contact with the bodies of deceased victims
- hunters in contact with dead animals

What are the typical signs and symptoms?

Sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. That is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, impaired kidney and liver function and internal and external bleeding.

The incubation period is between two and 21 days. A person will become contagious once they start to show symptoms.

When should you seek medical care?

If a person is in an area affected by the outbreak, or has been in contact with a person known or suspected to have Ebola, they should seek medical help immediately.

What is the treatment?

Severely ill patients require intensive supportive care. They need intravenous fluids to rehydrate them.

But there is currently no specific treatment for the disease. Some patients will recover with the appropriate care.

Can Ebola be prevented?

Currently there is no licensed vaccine for Ebola. Several are being tested but are not available for clinical use.

Is it safe to travel to affected areas?

The World Health Organisation reviews the public health situation regularly, and recommends travel or trade restrictions if necessary. The risk of infection for travellers is very low since person-to-person transmission results from direct contact with bodily fluids of victims.

Source: [World Health Organisation](#)