



PHSA Ebola Virus Disease FAQ

What is Ebola?

Ebola Virus Disease is a severe, acute viral disease, which causes haemorrhagic fever in humans and animals. It affects the body's vascular system, which moves blood through the body, which can lead to internal bleeding or organ failure. Although the virus origin is unknown, fruit bats are considered the likely host of the virus.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms can begin 2 to 21 days after exposure.

Initial symptoms include sudden onset of:

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle pain and weakness

Additional symptoms include:

- Rash
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- Haemorrhaging (bleeding from inside and outside the body)

How is Ebola spread?

Ebola virus can spread through:

- Contact with infected animals
- Contact with blood, body fluids or tissues of infected persons
- Contact with medical equipment, such as needles and syringes, contaminated with infected body fluids

Using appropriate personal protective equipment (double gloves, impermeable gown, mask, eye protection) is the best way to protect oneself against Ebola. Please refer to your site specific infection control manual or protocols for more information. Use extreme care when working with sharps to reduce risk of percutaneous injury. As long as rigorous standard, contact, and droplet precautions are used, the risk of contracting Ebola is low. Ebola is not spread through airborne transmission. The use of N95 respirator masks is only recommended during medical procedures (i.e. intubation) where blood or body fluids could become aerosolized.

Ebola cannot be spread:

- In the air
- Through food or water
- Via an infected person who does not have symptoms

When is a person infectious?

A person is considered infectious once they begin experiencing symptoms.

When is an employee considered to be exposed to Ebola?

An employee is considered to be exposed at the worksite if he/she meets the following conditions:

He/She did not wear the recommended personal protective equipment **AND**:

- Had direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs or any other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids **OR**
- Sustained a needle-stick injury with medical equipment, such as needles, contaminated with infected body fluids **OR**
- Processed or packaged the body fluids of suspected or confirmed Ebola

What happens if an employee is exposed at the worksite?

If an employee is exposed (contact without wearing appropriate PPE, or a BBF/Bloodsplash) to either a suspected or confirmed case of Ebola at work, he/she will be required to immediately self-isolate and contact the Workplace Health Call Centre Occupational Health Nurse (WHCC OHN) at 1-866-922-9464. Direct consultation with the Medical Health Officer for their geographical area will be arranged, and depending on their scenario, the Medical Health Officer will advise the employee on the specific recommended actions for their personal care and monitoring for signs and symptoms of Ebola. If the exposure happens after hours, employees must call their local Public Health Department to report the exposure and receive direction from the Medical Health Officer.

When should an employee self-monitor at home?

An employee should self-monitor for signs and symptoms of Ebola while caring for and for 21 days after termination of care for a person with a suspected or a confirmed case of Ebola.

What should employees who are self-monitoring do?

- Record temperature twice daily and report any reading $\geq 38.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ to their local Public Health Department.
- Refrain from taking any medications that reduce fever (e.g. Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen) for the duration of the monitoring period, if possible.
- Monitor for appearance of any other early symptoms including headache, muscle pain and weakness, sore throat, rash, diarrhea or vomiting.
- If symptoms appear, employees must **SELF ISOLATE** as quickly as possible and immediately call their local Public Health Department. Public Health will arrange direct discussion with Medical Health Officer for your geographical area to provide you with step by step instructions on how to travel to the hospital for medical treatment without exposing others. Please inform the WHCC OHN (1-866-922-9646).

What happens if an employee has Ebola?

Symptomatic employees must stay away from work, self-isolate, and seek medical care immediately for confirmation of disease and treatment. To prevent further spread of the virus, symptomatic employees must first speak with their local Public Health Department to create a plan for safe travel to the hospital. Public Health will connect with the Medical Health Officer in your geographical area to provide case specific instructions for your travel to hospital for treatment.

When should an employee contact the WHCC OHN (1-866-922-9646)?

Employees should contact the Workplace Health Call Centre if they:

- Are caring for/have cared for a person with suspected/confirmed case of Ebola without the appropriate use of personal protective equipment
- Are unsure if they meet the exposure criteria
- Meet the exposure criteria
- Are caring for/have cared for a suspected/confirmed case of Ebola and have symptoms of Ebola.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities:

For both suspected and confirmed Ebola exposures, managers will consult with Infection Control. Infection Control will confirm diagnosis, notify and collaborate with the WHCC OHN.

Please ensure that your staff have access to your site specific infection control policies and manuals.

If you have an employee who is returning from travel or work in West Africa, please contact PHSA Occupational Health occupationalhealthnursing@phsa.ca for further direction. Notify your employee to report to their local Public Health Department for instructions on self-monitoring.

Employee Responsibilities:

Review your site specific infection control policy for more details on contact and droplet precautions and the safety procedures that will be followed when caring for an Ebola patient.

Exposed employee: self-isolate immediately. Report exposure to your manager, and contact the WHCC OHN at 1-866-922-9464 who will then consult with the Medical Health Officer in your geographical area about your exposure details. The Medical Health Officer will advise you on a plan for self-monitoring and for when and how to come to the hospital for medical treatments if needed. If you are exposed after hours, call your local Public Health

Department for consultation and discussion with your Medical Health Officer.

Symptomatic employee: do not attend work, self-isolate, and seek medical care immediately. Call your local Public Health Department. The Medical Health Officer for your geographical area will provide you with instruction on how to travel to the hospital for treatment. Report to the WHCC OHN at 1-866-922-9464.

References:

- Public Health Agency of Canada. [Ebola Virus Disease](#). September 2014. Retrieved September 29, 2014.
- Public Health Agency of Canada. [Interim Guidance – Ebola Virus Disease: Infection Prevention and Control Measures for Border, Healthcare Settings and Self-Monitoring at Home](#).
- World Health Organization. [Frequently Asked Questions on Ebola Virus Disease](#). August 2014. Retrieved September 30, 2014.
- Centre for Disease Control. [Ebola \(Ebola Virus Disease\)](#). September 2014. Retrieved September 30, 2014.

Additional Information:

[Public Health Agency of Canada: Ebola Virus Disease - Health Professionals](#)

[PHAC: Interim Guidance Ebola Virus Disease: Infection Prevention and Control Measures for Borders, Healthcare Settings and Self-Monitoring at Home](#)

[WHO: Ebola Global Alert and Response](#)

[WHO Ebola: Protective measures for medical staff](#)

[BCCDC: Ebola Virus Disease Overview](#)

[Information for travellers returning from Africa](#)

This information is current as of October 17, 2014 and is subject to change.