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### **What is Ebola virus disease?**

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is an often deadly illness caused by the Ebola virus. It most commonly affects people and nonhuman primates, such as monkeys, chimpanzees, and gorillas.

There are four different strains of the Ebola virus that cause disease in people: Ebola virus (*Zaire ebolavirus*); Sudan virus (*Sudan ebolavirus*); Taï Forest virus (*Taï Forest ebolavirus*, formerly *Côte d'Ivoire ebolavirus*); and Bundibugyo virus (*Bundibugyo ebolavirus*).

### **Who gets Ebola virus disease?**

Ebola virus has been found in wild animals, such as fruit bats, monkeys, chimpanzees or gorillas, in parts of central and west Africa. Outbreaks of EVD have occurred in those areas. People become infected with Ebola virus through contact with infected wild animals or contact with blood or body fluids (urine, feces, saliva, sweat, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of infected humans. People at higher risk of infection include healthcare workers, family members or others who have close contact with infected people or who have contact with their bodies during funerals or burying rituals.

### **How is Ebola virus disease spread?**

Ebola virus can spread to people when they have contact with an infected animal's blood, body fluids, or tissues. Ebola virus then spreads from person to person through direct contact with blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from EVD. This can happen when a person touches the infected body fluids or objects that are contaminated with them, such as medical equipment like needles and syringes. The virus enters the body through broken skin, through the eyes, nose or mouth, or through sexual contact.

Ebola is not spread through the air (for example, by coughing or sneezing), by water, or through cooked food.

### **What are the symptoms of Ebola virus disease?**

Symptoms of EVD include fever, severe headache, muscle or joint pain, weakness, fatigue, sore throat, loss of appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal (stomach) pain, and, in some cases, unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising). Many of these symptoms are also present with other more common diseases, such as malaria and typhoid fever.

### **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms usually appear 8-10 days after exposure, with a range of 2-21 days.

## **How is Ebola virus disease diagnosed?**

If EVD is suspected based on the person's symptoms and exposure to Ebola virus, such as having close contact with an Ebola-infected person, he or she should be isolated (separated from other people) immediately and the local health department should be notified. Special laboratory tests of

the blood are needed to confirm the diagnosis of EVD.

### What is the treatment for Ebola virus disease?

Two treatments have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat Ebola virus disease caused by one strain of the Ebola virus (species *Zaire ebolavirus*), in adults and children. The first drug, approved in October 2020, [Inmazeb™](#), is a combination of three monoclonal antibodies. The second drug, [Ebanga™](#), is a single monoclonal antibody and was approved in December 2020. Monoclonal antibodies are proteins produced in a laboratory or other manufacturing facility that act like natural antibodies to stop a germ such as a virus from multiplying after it has infected a person. These particular monoclonal antibodies bind to part of the Ebola virus's surface to prevent the virus from entering a person's cells.

There is no FDA-authorized treatment for the three other strains of the Ebola virus that cause disease in people.

Treatment for EVD also consists of supportive care and relief of symptoms.

### How can Ebola virus disease be prevented?

There are several steps to take to prevent EVD when living in or traveling to an area with EVD:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid contact with other people's blood or body fluids.
- Do not handle items that might have come in contact with a person's blood or body fluids, such as clothing, bedding, and medical equipment.
- Avoid participation in funeral or burial rituals that require handling a dead body.
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids and raw meat prepared from these animals (bushmeat) or meat from an unknown source.
- Avoid contact with semen from a man who had EVD until you know the virus is gone from the semen.
- Wear protective clothing and follow infection control recommendations when caring for an infected person.

The FDA approved the [Ebola vaccine rVSV-ZEBOV \(called Ervebo™\)](#) on December 19, 2019. This is the first FDA-approved vaccine for Ebola virus disease caused by one strain of the Ebola virus (species *Zaire ebolavirus*). This vaccine is recommended as a pre-exposure vaccine for certain adults who are at risk of being exposed to Ebola virus (for example, outbreak responders, laboratorians or other staff at certain laboratories who handle specimens that might contain Ebola virus, and healthcare personnel working at state or federally designated special pathogens treatment centers).

There is currently no FDA-licensed vaccine to protect against the three other strains of the Ebola virus that cause disease in people.

## Could Ebola virus be used for bioterrorism?

Ebola virus and other viruses that cause hemorrhagic fever are considered possible bioterrorism agents because the viruses could be intentionally released, spread from person to person, and cause severe disease or death.

## How can I learn more about Ebola virus disease?

- If you have concerns about EVD, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at the [VDH Local Health Districts page](#).
- Visit the [VDH website that contains information on Ebola virus disease](#).
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [the CDC page on ebola](#).

October 2022

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