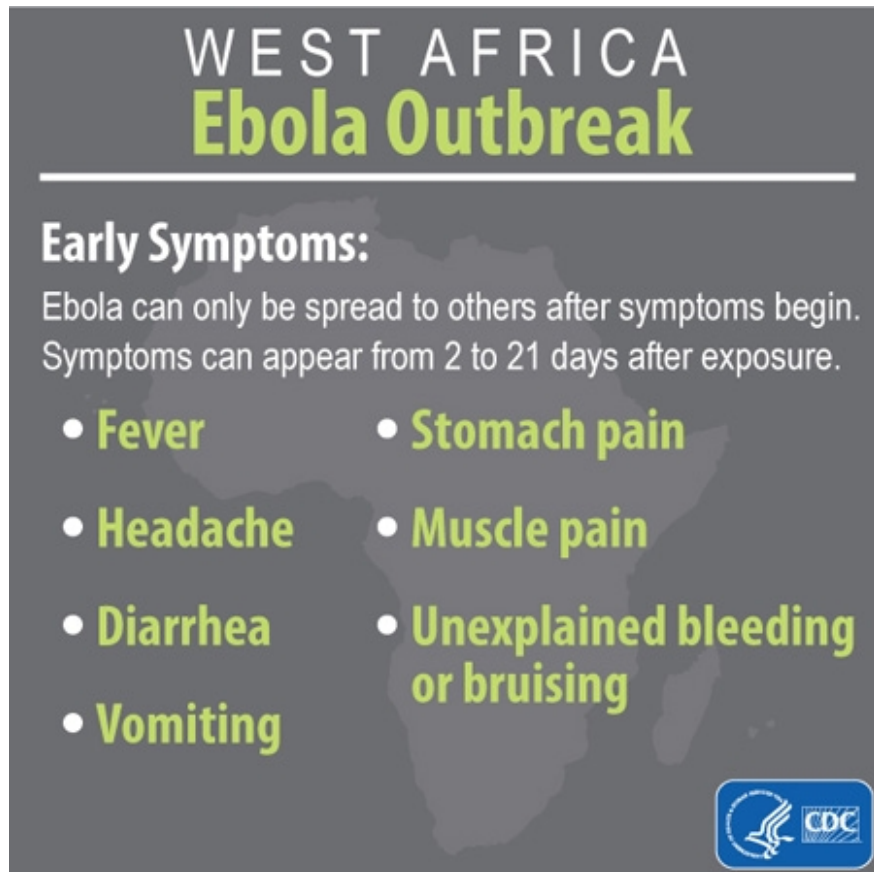


---

## Transmission

---



[West Africa Ebola Outbreak \(Infographic\)](#)

[PDF - 1 page]



Facts About Ebola in the U.S. (Infographic)

[PDF - 1 page]

Because the natural reservoir host of Ebola viruses has not yet been identified, the way in which the virus first appears in a human at the start of an outbreak is unknown. However, scientists believe that the first patient becomes infected through contact with an infected animal, such as a fruit bat or primate (apes and monkeys), which is called a spillover event. Person-to-person transmission follows and can lead to large numbers of affected people. In some past Ebola outbreaks, primates were also affected by Ebola, and multiple spillover events occurred when people touched or ate infected primates.

When an infection does occur in humans, the virus can be spread in several ways to others. Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth) with

- blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola
- objects (like needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus
- infected fruit bats or primates (apes and monkeys)

Ebola is not spread through the air or by water, or in general, by food. However, in Africa, Ebola may be spread as a result of handling bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food) and contact with infected bats. There is no evidence that mosquitos or other insects can transmit Ebola virus. Only a few species of mammals (for example, humans, bats, monkeys, and apes) have shown the ability to become infected with and spread Ebola virus.

Healthcare providers caring for Ebola patients and the family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with infected blood or body fluids of sick patients.

During outbreaks of Ebola, the disease can spread quickly within healthcare settings (such as a clinic or hospital). Exposure to Ebola can occur in healthcare settings where hospital staff are not wearing appropriate protective equipment, including masks, gowns, and gloves and eye protection.

Dedicated medical equipment (preferable disposable, when possible) should be used by healthcare personnel providing patient care. Proper cleaning and disposal of instruments, such as needles and syringes, is also important. If instruments are not disposable, they must be sterilized before being used again. Without adequate sterilization of the instruments, virus transmission can continue and amplify an outbreak.

Once someone recovers from Ebola, they can no longer spread the virus. However, Ebola virus has been found in semen for up to 3 months. Abstinence from sex (including oral sex) is recommended for at least 3 months. If abstinence is not possible, condoms may help prevent the spread of disease.

## Related Links

- Review of Human-to-Human Transmission of Ebola Virus
- Questions and Answers about Ebola and Pets
- Questions and Answers on the 2014 West Africa Ebola Outbreak
- Ebola Virus Disease Information for Clinicians in U.S. Healthcare Settings
- Frequently Asked Questions: Safe Management of Patients with Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in U.S. Hospitals
- Infection Control for Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers in the African Health Care Setting (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/vhf-manual.html>)
- Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Hospitalized Patients with Known or Suspected Ebola Virus Disease in U.S. Hospitals
- Outbreaks Chronology: Ebola Virus Disease
- Filoviridae (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/virus-families/filoviridae.html>)

## File Formats Help:

How do I view different file formats (PDF, DOC, PPT, MPEG) on this site?

(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/>)

(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/#pdf>)

Page last reviewed: October 22, 2014

Page last updated: October 22, 2014

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (/index.htm)

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (/ncezid/index.html)

Division of High-Consequence Pathogens and Pathology (DHCPP) (/ncezid/dhcpp/index.html)

Viral Special Pathogens Branch (VSPB) (/ncezid/dhcpp/vspb/index.html)