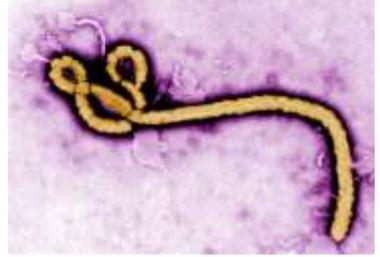


# Ebola

## Question & Answers

### What is Ebola?

Ebola is a virus discovered in Africa in 1976. Ebola is a serious disease and reactions can range from mild to fatal in humans. There are at least 5 different known strains of Ebola and not all cause disease in humans. The current strain in West Africa is known as “Ebola Zaire.”



### What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Weakness
- Lack of appetite
- Joint & muscle aches

### How long does it take for symptoms to show?

Current thinking is that it takes 2 to 21 days for symptoms to show, although usually it is 5 to 7 days. Typically, the first signs are a fever involving a headache, joint and muscle pain, sore throat and severe muscle weakness. Many of those symptoms are similar to flu, so Ebola is not immediately obvious, though it should be suspected in anyone who has been in West Africa recently.

### How is Ebola spread?

The Ebola virus is transmitted in the bodily fluids of people who are symptomatic and seriously ill, who are likely to be vomiting, bleeding or have diarrhea. This could include sneezing, coughing, vomiting of “droplet particles” which contain the virus. Blood, feces and vomit are the most infectious fluids, and in late stages of the disease even tiny amounts can carry high loads of virus, which is more contagious.

### Who could be a carrier for Ebola?

If someone does not have symptoms of the Ebola virus, they are not contagious and cannot be a carrier.

### How long does the Ebola virus live on contaminated surfaces, such as bed sheets, door knobs, etc.?

It's different in every set of circumstances. The Ebola virus eventually dries out in the air and dies. Ebola is a virus that is meant to live inside blood or fluid in your cells. It's not meant to live in the open air, so it dies. A sheet that has wet blood in it is more dangerous than one with dried blood, because by then it would have dried out. It is thought that under the right conditions the virus could linger on surfaces for several days – possibly as long as six days.

### How about saliva?

WHO (World Health Organization) says saliva at the most severe stage of the disease, and also tears, may carry some risk, but the studies are inconclusive. The virus has been detected in breast milk.

# Ebola Q&A continued

## What about sweat – for example could I get Ebola from using gym equipment?

No. Nobody who had Ebola and was symptomatic, with intense muscle weakness and a fever in the early stages, would be well enough to go to the gym – and until they are symptomatic, they are not infectious. Sweat, anyway, is probably not a source of large amounts of virus – in fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) says whole live virus has never been isolated from sweat.

## Can it be sexually transmitted?

Yes, and the virus lasts in the semen of people who have recovered, maybe for as long as 90 days

## How do I protect myself against Ebola?

At this time Ebola is a concern for travelers to areas in West Africa, and the CDC and State Department are discouraging all unnecessary travel to this region. Also, good hand washing and other practices used to avoid viruses are important.

## How is Ebola treated?

There are no FDA-approved specific medications to treat Ebola available. Right now, we treat Ebola through:

- Excellent medical and nursing care
- Monitoring fluids and providing additional fluids, if needed
- Maintaining frequent vital signs and lab monitoring

Treatment at the immediate onset of symptoms has the best results for successfully fighting off the virus.

## If Ebola is not easily transmitted, why are there so many precautions (hazmat suits, protective gear, isolation unit) being put into place?

Unlike other viruses the mortality rate is high and there is no vaccine. As symptoms progress, a patient becomes much more infectious and therefore those in direct contact with bodily fluids such as health care workers, must take the most safeguards to avoid transmission of the virus to themselves and others thereby working to bring about an end to the outbreak.

This Q&A was compiled by the **Massachusetts Nurses Association** from numerous sources and represents the most accurate information available at this time. For more information in the future see the MNA website at <http://massnurses.org/health-and-safety/current-topics/ebola-resources>

## Other Ebola information resources:

**Mass Department of Public Health:** email your questions to [AskEbola@state.ma.us](mailto:AskEbola@state.ma.us)

**Emory University:** <http://advancingyourhealth.org/highlights/posting-policy/faqs-about-the-ebola-virus-and-emory-university-hospital/#q1>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/13/how-avoid-catching-ebola>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>

[http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/ebola-ask-well-spread-public-transit/?\\_r=0](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/ebola-ask-well-spread-public-transit/?_r=0)

**CDC:** <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/> and

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/qas.html>