



*Office of the Health Officer*

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 30, 2014  
TO: Prince George's County Government Employees  
FROM: Pamela B. Creekmur, Health Officer *PBC*  
RE: Ebola Advisory

The current Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea has been an emerging health topic for several months. At this time, there are still **no** Ebola cases in Maryland. As a County government having routine contact with the public, please keep the following in mind:

- **Ebola is not spread through the air.** It requires contact with blood or with other bodily fluids such as saliva to spread. In clinics, routine use of universal precautions to prevent exposure to blood and bodily fluids is already in place for basic protection against many diseases, including Ebola.
- **Ebola is not contagious until a person becomes symptomatic.** The first symptom of Ebola is usually a fever greater than 100.4°F.
- In order to be at risk for Ebola an individual would need to have traveled from one of the affected areas (**Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Guinea**) within the past 21 days and/or been exposed to someone who has Ebola.

As of Monday, October 27, Maryland began directly monitoring the health of all returning travelers from the countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, which are battling a serious outbreak. This effort will consist of extensive outreach and monitoring. Screeners at airports of entry will provide the names and contact information for all travelers originating from the affected countries with destinations in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) will make contact with these individuals through a new outbound call center and will provide specific guidance, information, and 24-hour numbers for assistance.

As we continue to monitor the changing Ebola virus disease situation, specific precautions to prevent spread of the disease are strongly advised. If you have recently traveled to an Ebola affected area, you should:



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[www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health)

- Monitor your health for 21 days if you were in an area with an Ebola outbreak;
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever (temperature of 100.4°F/ 38°C) and any of the following symptoms: headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, or unexplained bruising or bleeding;
- Tell your doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the office or emergency room. Advance notice will help your doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the office; and
- Inform your child's school of your symptoms and recent travel history.

As the flu season begins and other viruses such as Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) increase nationwide, there are certain precautions you can take to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Even if you have not traveled, please remember to:

- **Stay at home when you are sick.** This is important to prevent disease transmission in schools. You should not leave home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (temperature of 100.4°F/ 38°C), without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- **Wash your hands often.**
- **Cover your cough/sneezes** with your elbow or a tissue, and keep your hands away from your face.
- Get your family **vaccinated against the flu.**
- **Speak with your health care provider** regarding any needed medical attention and/or treatment necessary for symptoms.

Our Disease Control staff has been working closely with DHMH, and DHMH communicates directly with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about issues relating to health care facilities and treating patients who may present with "Ebola-like" symptoms and whose travel history might give hospital staff reason for concern.

The County has published a web page about the Ebola virus (<http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/Health/Services/DiseaseControlServices/ebola/Pages/default.aspx>) and we will be updating it as information changes.

If you have general questions about the Ebola virus disease or about current recommendations for recent travelers, you may visit the following CDC websites:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/what-need-to-know-ebola.pdf>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/ga.html>
- <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/ebola-inbound-infographic>



Prince George's County Health Department  
**EBOLA: UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS**  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Ebola is a severe, often fatal, viral disease. It is caused by an infection with one of the Ebola virus strains.**

## **HAS EBOLA BEEN IDENTIFIED IN MARYLAND?**

To date, the only case of Ebola diagnosed in the United States is in Texas. No cases have been identified in Maryland. Local and state health departments will continue to respond to inquiries from medical providers.



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County Executive



## **DOES EBOLA POSE A SIGNIFICANT RISK IN THE UNITED STATES?**

Although the risk of the Ebola virus spreading in the US is low, it is possible that additional cases might be identified in persons who had close contact with the first patient diagnosed in the US or in other travelers. In response, the CDC issued a Health Advisory Alert on October 2, 2014 to highlight the recommendations for healthcare personnel and health officials when evaluating patients for Ebola infection.

## **HOW IS EBOLA SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON?**

The virus is spread by contact with an infected patient's blood or bodily fluids, including saliva, urine, sweat, feces, vomit or semen. It can be spread through contact with clothing/linens contaminated with bodily fluids, contact with some animals, and used needles or syringes.

- The Ebola virus spreads only when someone is exhibiting symptoms
- Individuals that do not have a fever are not contagious and cannot transmit the virus to another person
- Transmission occurs through direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids

## **AFTER A PERSON IS INFECTED WITH THE EBOLA VIRUS, HOW SOON DO SYMPTOMS BEGIN?**

Ebola signs and symptoms may appear anywhere from 2-21 days after exposure, though 8-10 days is most common. Usually the first sign of Ebola is a high fever (higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit).

## **WHEN IS SOMEONE ABLE TO SPREAD THE DISEASE TO OTHERS?**

Ebola only spreads when a person is sick. He/she must have symptoms to spread the disease to others. After 21 days, if an exposed person does not develop symptoms, he/she will not become sick with Ebola.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'VE TRAVELED FROM AN EBOLA AFFECTED COUNTRY?

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Travelers from Ebola affected countries—Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone, should:

- Self-monitor your health for 21 days from departure from the country including taking your temperature
- If symptoms begin, seek health care immediately

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EBOLA?

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- Fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Weakness
- Severe Headache
- Joint and Muscle Aches
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach Pains
- Lack of Appetite
- Red Eyes
- Skin Rash
- Unexplained bleeding and bruising

## WHAT TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR PERSONS INFECTED WITH THE EBOLA VIRUS?

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At this time, there is no approved drug or vaccine for Ebola. Supportive therapy includes maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure; balancing the patient's fluids and electrolytes; and treating them for any complicating infections.

## HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF?

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- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Use alcohol-based hand rub on your hands if soap and water are not available
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people
- If you or your child is sick, limit contact by staying at home to keep from infecting others

If someone has symptoms of Ebola and possible exposure, that person should limit contact with others and see a health care provider immediately.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC  
<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
<http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oideor/sipor/sitepages/ebola.aspx>

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