About Ebola

- Ebola, previously known as Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. Ebola can cause disease in humans and nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees).

- Ebola is caused by infection with a virus of the family Filoviridae, genus Ebolavirus. There are five identified Ebola virus species, four of which are known to cause disease in humans: Ebola virus (Zaire ebolavirus); Sudan virus (Sudan ebolavirus); Taï Forest virus (Taï Forest ebolavirus, formerly Côte d’Ivoire ebolavirus); and Bundibugyo virus (Bundibugyo ebolavirus). The fifth, Reston virus (Reston ebolavirus), has caused disease in nonhuman primates, but not in humans.

- Ebola viruses are found in several African countries. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically in Africa.

- The natural reservoir host of Ebola virus remains unknown. However, on the basis of evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe that the virus is animal-borne and that bats are the most likely reservoir. Four of the five virus strains occur in an animal host native to Africa.

Symptoms

- The incubation period ranges from 2 to 21 days (most commonly 8-10 days)
  
  - Early symptoms include sudden fever, chills, and muscle aches.

  - Nausea, vomiting, chest pain, sore throat, abdominal pain, and diarrhea may follow.

  - Symptoms become increasingly severe mental confusion, bleeding inside and outside the body, shock, and multi-organ failure.
Transmission

- The virus that causes Ebola is not airborne
- Ebola is spread by close contact with an infected person.
- Ebola is spread through direct contact with:
  - Blood or body fluids (such as saliva, sweat, semen, stool or urine) of an infected person or animal, or
  - Through contact with objects that have been contaminated with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person
- Close Contact is defined as:
  - Being within approximately 3 feet (1 meter) of an EVD patient or within the patient’s room or care area for a prolonged period of time (e.g. healthcare personnel, household members) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment – i.e. standard, droplet, and contact precautions
  - Having direct brief contact – (e.g. shaking hands) with an EVD patient while not wearing recommended PPE.
  - Brief interactions, such as walking by a person or moving through a hospital, do not constitute close contact.
  - Close contacts are determined by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH)
    - Monitoring by DHH via phone call to determine if the person has gotten ill.

Treatment

- No FDA-approved vaccine or medicine (e.g., antiviral drug) is available for Ebola.
- Symptoms of Ebola are treated as they appear. The following basic interventions, when used early, can significantly improve the chances of survival:
  - Providing intravenous fluids (IV) and balancing electrolytes (body salts)
  - Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
  - Treating other infections if they occur
  - Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.
• Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive care and the patient’s immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years, possibly longer. It isn't known if people who recover are immune for life or if they can become infected with a different species of Ebola. Some people who have recovered from Ebola have developed long-term complications, such as joint and vision problems.

Prevention

• There is no FDA-approved vaccine available for Ebola.

• If you travel to or are in an area affected by an Ebola outbreak, make sure to do the following:
  – Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid contact with blood and body fluids.
  – Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids (such as clothes, bedding, needles, and medical equipment).
  – Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
  – Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared from these animals.
  – Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. The U.S. embassy or consulate is often able to provide advice on facilities.
  – After you return, monitor your health for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola (www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/symptoms/index.html).

• Prevention: Minimize exposure particularly in the following sectors:
  – Schools - particularly those of higher learning as students and faculty may be conducting research in West Africa
  – Faith based organizations - as they have missionary/humanitarian efforts in affected countries
  – Ports, airports
  – Oil/Industry
• Prevention: To conduct active medical and public health vigilance so as to identify and isolate symptomatic cases.

To discuss a possible Ebola exposure or to report a suspected case, contact the Louisiana Office of Public Health immediately at **(504) 568-8313** or after 4:30 p.m. weekdays and weekends **(800) 256-2748**.

Information provided by the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Additional Resources:

**CDC:** [www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html)

**DHH:** [www.dhh.state.la.us/index.cfm/page/197](http://www.dhh.state.la.us/index.cfm/page/197)  [www.dhh.la.gov/ebola](http://www.dhh.la.gov/ebola)