

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

## **Ebola Virus Disease Fact Sheet**

**UPDATED: November 10, 2014**

### **Preparedness**

The state of Florida is prepared to identify and treat patients who may have Ebola virus disease (EVD). In the event a patient with EVD is diagnosed in Florida, the Florida Department of Health will collaborate with healthcare partners to ensure appropriate patient care, and protocols for isolation, infection control and the assessment of risk to relevant individuals are followed.

Governor Rick Scott issued an Executive Order on October 25, 2014 mandating 21-day health monitoring to include twice daily checks by DOH personnel of people returning to or visiting Florida from CDC designated Ebola-affected areas of West Africa. The county health department in each of Florida's 67 counties regularly communicates with area hospitals, medical providers and laboratories to ensure appropriate reporting and public health actions can be taken, when necessary. Looking forward, the Florida Department of Health and Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) will continue to collaborate to ensure the health and safety of all Floridians and visitors. On October 6, 2014, the FDEM activated the state's Joint Information Center (JIC), allowing state officials to share accurate and timely information with the public. The first priority of the JIC is to protect the health of Florida's residents and visitors and to ensure the safety of Florida's families.

### **Ebola**

Ebola virus disease is a severe type of Viral Hemorrhagic Fever in humans and nonhuman primates (such as monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees). Ebola virus disease 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. The first Ebolavirus species was discovered in 1976 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo near the Ebola River. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically.

### **Transmission**

When an infection does occur in humans, there are several ways in which the virus can be transmitted to others. These include:

- Direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected ill person
- Exposure to objects (such as needles) contaminated with infected secretions
- Participation in funeral rites that includes direct exposure (contact) to human remains in the geographic area where the outbreak is occurring

EVD is not an airborne disease. EVD is often spread through close contact with infectious secretions when caring for ill persons. In order for the virus to be transmitted, an individual would have to have direct contact with an individual who is currently experiencing symptoms or with their bodily secretions. However, droplets (e.g., splashes or sprays) of bodily secretions from a person who is currently experiencing symptoms of Ebola could be infectious, and therefore certain precautions (called standard, contact, and droplet precautions) are recommended for use in healthcare settings to prevent the transmission of Ebola virus from patients to healthcare personnel, other patients and/or family members.

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#### **Florida Department of Health**

Office of Communications  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1705  
PHONE: 850/245-4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

#### **www.FloridaHealth.gov**

TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
YOUTUBE: fldoh

## **Symptoms of Ebola**

A Floridian must have been in direct contact with a symptomatic individual diagnosed with Ebola in order to contract the disease. Symptoms of EVD typically include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, tiredness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding. As the disease progresses, some patients may develop multi-organ failure, leading to shock and death. The most common occurrence of signs of infection is 8 to 10 days, while symptoms may appear 2 to 21 days after exposure.

## **Treatment**

Treatment is currently limited to supportive therapy, consisting of balancing the patient's fluids, maintaining their oxygen and blood pressure levels, and treating any complicating infections. Timely treatment of EVD is challenging due to the difficulty of diagnosing a patient in the early stages of infection. If a person is exhibiting early symptoms of EVD and has travel history in line with CDC guidelines, the patient should be isolated immediately and public health professionals notified.

## **Ebola Outbreaks**

In outbreak settings, Ebola virus is typically initially spread to humans after contact with infected wildlife such as bats, monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees, and is then spread person-to-person through direct contact with bodily fluids. The incubation period is usually 8 to 10 days (ranges from 2 to 21 days). Patients can be infectious through all stages of the illness, becoming increasingly infectious as the illness worsens. Deceased persons can also be a source of infection, if direct contact is made with the body. During outbreaks of EVD, those at highest risk of contracting Ebola include health care workers, family and friends who are in close contact with an ill infected individual. Precautions should be taken to limit the spread of the virus, through strict attention to all environmental cleaning and disinfection and use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

## **Prevention**

Early recognition and identification of patients with potential Ebola is critical to ensure they receive appropriate care and do not infect others. Those at greatest risk are health care workers caring for persons with advanced EVD. When cases of Ebola appear, healthcare workers must be able to recognize a case of EVD and employ practical isolation precautions and barrier techniques to avoid contact with the blood or secretions of an infected patient. Such precautions include wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). If a patient with EVD dies, it is also important that direct contact with the body of the deceased patient be prevented.

A few established primary prevention measures include:

- Patient placement and isolation
- Healthcare provider Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Environmental infection control

## **Additional Resources**

The Florida Department of Health

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/ebola/index.html>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>

The World Health Organization (WHO) <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/> and

<http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/en/>