

## Get the Facts About Ebola and Your Family

With all the talk of Ebola in the news, it is natural for parents, guardians, and children to be concerned. It is very unlikely that you or your children will be exposed to Ebola, but you may have questions. This fact sheet provides information that may be helpful to you as a parent or caregiver and help to answer your or your child's questions about Ebola.

### **Ebola is unlikely to affect you or your family**

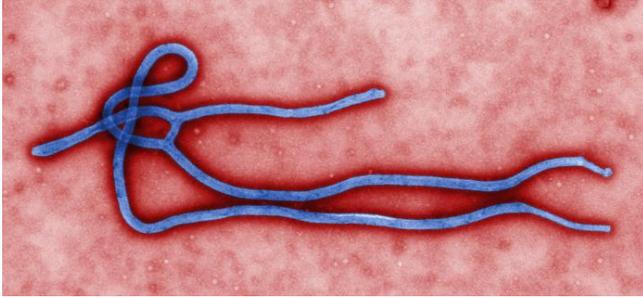
Ebola is a rare disease caused by a viral infection. The virus was first discovered in Africa in 1976 and since then has caused sporadic outbreaks. The current outbreak in West Africa has been occurring since December 2013.



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) are actively screening and monitoring all travelers coming into the U.S. and New Hampshire from the affected West African countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. DPHS will monitor these travelers every day and be able to quickly identify and isolate any persons who might be developing symptoms before they can transmit infection.

### **Ebola is not easily transmissible**

- It takes direct physical contact with the blood or body fluids of a person who is showing symptoms and sick with Ebola in order to get infected.
- Infected fluids also need to somehow get past the skin barrier and be touched to areas of broken skin (i.e., cuts) or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth) in order for someone to get infected.
- Even with direct physical contact, a large proportion of people will not develop Ebola.
- Ebola does not survive for long periods of time in the environment.
- Studies of past infections have shown that Ebola is not transmitted through the air.
- You cannot get Ebola through food or water.
- You cannot get Ebola from someone who has been exposed but is not having symptoms.



## Communicate with your children

Given what we know about how Ebola is transmitted, and since DPHS is actively monitoring travelers from Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia for symptoms of Ebola in order to rapidly identify and isolate any potentially infectious person, there is no risk of your child contracting infection from another child of a person who may have recently travelled to one of these three affected countries in West Africa.

### Here are some basic steps you can take to help alleviate fear and anxiety in your child:

- ▶ Keep yourself informed—you may not know all the answers, but knowing about Ebola can help to inform and develop a conversation.
  - ▶ Be calm and confident. Reassure your child they are safe.
  - ▶ Talk calmly and simply to your child about Ebola, taking into consideration their maturity and coping style to help decide how much information to share with them.
  - ▶ Ask what they have already heard and understand about Ebola and what other information they would like to know.
- ▶ Be honest and answer questions based on facts.
  - ▶ Help them understand the difference in likelihood of being exposed to common illnesses such as the cold or flu, compared with the very unlikely possibility they would come into contact with rare diseases such as Ebola.
  - ▶ If you are unsure about an answer to a question, tell them you don't know but can try to help them answer their question.
  - ▶ Avoid telling a child "they shouldn't worry" but support them in learning and overcoming any potential fears.
  - ▶ Limit exposure to news and monitor social media and internet exposure.
  - ▶ Explain that the situation in West Africa is very different than in the United States—remind them that our health care system is among the best in the world for taking care of sick people.
  - ▶ Remind them that Ebola is rare and does not exist everywhere. When cases are found, the person with the infection is taken to a safe place to be cared for so that he or she can get better and not make anyone else sick.
  - ▶ All children should be encouraged to show consideration and respect for classmates and friends with family ties to West Africa, who may be experiencing teasing or bullying as a result of Ebola stigma.
  - ▶ Remind your children that Ebola is caused by a virus, not a person or a group, and that the virus is difficult to spread.

## For more information

Call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at (603) 271-4496 or visit the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).