



What EMS Should Know About Ebola

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Current Assessment: The largest outbreak of the Ebola virus is occurring on the African continent with fear that the deadly disease will spread to other countries. So far, there have been over 672 persons that have contracted Ebola according to the World Health Organization, with the number increasing every day. All of the patients have been in Africa, including Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria. The first US death from the virus was a person traveling from Nigeria to Minneapolis when he became ill in Lagos, Nigeria, was hospitalized and eventually died. There have been two healthcare workers from the US who have contracted the disease while performing missionary work and are in satisfactory condition in Africa. There have been no documented cases in the United States.

Background:

- Ebola is a hemorrhagic fever virus that is spread by contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or vomitus, or by contact with instruments containing the virus such as syringes.
- It can spread rapidly and it has an extremely high fatality rate.
- Patients begin to show symptoms anywhere from 2 -21 days after infection (incubation period)
- Patients normally complain of fevers, sore throat, headache, joint pain, nausea and vomiting
- As the disease progresses, the patients will experience severe bleeding
- There is no vaccine for Ebola and infection usually requires aggressive supportive therapy
- Diagnosis is made using sophisticated analytic laboratory tests

The following countries have all had at least one case of Ebola throughout history

- Guinea
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
- Gabon
- South Sudan
- Ivory Coast
- Uganda
- Republic of the Congo (ROC)
- South Africa (imported)
- Nigeria



What Does EMS Need to Know:

EMS Providers should be educated about what to look for in an Ebola patient including

- Early detection can be difficult due to the non-specific symptoms,
- Patients with an unexplained fever and **recent travel to a country known to have had Ebola** specifically Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria or had direct contact with someone known to have Ebola, should be treated as infected until proven otherwise
- Exercise immediate contact isolation in patients with suspected Ebola to include
 - Glove
 - Goggles or faceshield
 - Gown
 - Respiratory mask with a bloodborne pathogen barrier
- The receiving hospital should be notified immediately if EMS is transporting a suspected Ebola patient since this patient will need to be isolated
- All equipment and surfaces potentially contaminated from treating a suspected Ebola patient will need thorough decontamination
- Be extremely careful with blood exposure including used needles
- Notify your local health department

More information can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>

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