

Health Advisory

Ebola Outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel and Health Officials Evaluating Patients for Possible Ebola Virus Disease. Remember to take a travel history on all patients, and call the Louisiana Office of Public Health Infectious Disease Hotline at 1-(800) 256-2748 immediately if Ebola is suspected.

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to provide healthcare personnel and health officials with current recommendations regarding evaluation of patients who may have been exposed to Ebola virus, and:

- (1) for any patient presenting with fever and other symptoms consistent with Ebola virus disease (such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage) with increased vigilance in obtaining a travel history, particularly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 21 days before illness onset;
- (2) isolate patients who report travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and are exhibiting Ebola symptoms in a private room with a private bathroom, and implement standard, contact, and droplet precautions (gowns, facemask, eye protection, and gloves); and
- (3) Immediately inform the Louisiana Office of Public Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology Hotline at 1-(800) 256-2748.

Please disseminate this information to urgent and emergency care providers, infectious disease specialists, intensive care physicians, primary care physicians, and infection control specialists, as well as to emergency departments, urgent care centers, and microbiology laboratories.

Background

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is experiencing an Ebola outbreak. According to the World Health Organization, from April 4, 2018 through May 17, 2018, a total of 45 cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) were reported, resulting in 25 deaths. Fourteen of the 45 cases have been confirmed. Three cases have been in healthcare workers. Cases have been reported from three health zones: Bikoro, Iboko, and Wangata (See map on page 5).

Most of the cases have been from the Bikoro health zone, which is remote and difficult to reach. However, there has been at least one confirmed case in Mbandaka which is a city of 1.2 million people. There is concern that spread to this urban area increases the risk of international spread.

EVD is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of four viruses (Ebolavirus genus) that cause disease in humans. Ebola infection is associated with fever and additional symptoms, such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage. Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, feces, vomit, sweat, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola or through contact with objects (such as needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with these fluids. Persons at highest risk of developing infection are those who have had direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an individual diagnosed with EVD. This includes any person who: 1) provided care for an Ebola patient, such as a healthcare provider or family member who did not adhere to recommended infection control precautions (e.g., not wearing recommended personal protective equipment); 2) those who have had close physical contact with an individual diagnosed with EVD; or, 3) those who lived with or visited an Ebola-diagnosed patient while he or she was ill. The main source for spread is human-to-human transmission. Avoiding contact with infected persons (as well as potentially infected corpses) and their blood and body fluids is of paramount importance.

Persons are not contagious before they are symptomatic. The incubation period (the time from exposure until onset of symptoms) is typically 8-10 days, but can range from 2-21 days. Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.

Recommendations

Early recognition is critical to controlling the spread of Ebola virus. Consequently, healthcare personnel should elicit the patient's travel history and consider the possibility of EVD in patients who present with fever, muscle pain, severe headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, or unexplained hemorrhage, in the setting of recent travel to a region with active Ebola transmission, which currently is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Should the patient report a history of recent travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and exhibit such symptoms, immediate action should be taken.

A patient evaluation algorithm is attached.

Patients in whom a diagnosis of EVD is being considered should be isolated in a single room (with a private bathroom), and healthcare personnel should follow standard, contact, and droplet precautions, including the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Infection control personnel and the local health department should be immediately contacted for consultation.

Healthcare personnel in the United States should immediately contact their local health department regarding any person being evaluated for EVD if the medical evaluation suggests that diagnostic testing may be indicated. Diagnostic testing for Ebola is only available at select laboratories in the U.S. The CDC, Texas DSHS, and certain Texas Laboratory Response Network laboratories offer Ebola PCR testing. Consultation with DSHS and the CDC are required before submitting specimens for testing. Further information about diagnostic testing for Ebola can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-specimen-collection-submission-patients-suspected-infection-ebola.html>.

More Information

The following references provide additional information about case definition, clinical presentation and clinical course of EVD, infection control, and patient management:

- Guidelines for clinicians in U.S. healthcare settings are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/clinician-information-us-healthcare-settings.html>.
- Guidelines for infection prevention and control for hospitalized patients with known or suspected Ebola in U.S. hospitals are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/infection-prevention-and-control-recommendations.html>.
- Guidelines for safe management of patients with Ebola in U.S. hospitals are at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/patient-management-us-hospitals.html>.

