



Preserving Public Health in Delaware: Monitoring & Managing Potential Ebola Virus Exposure

The outbreak of Ebola virus disease in West Africa continues to unfold. Particularly impacted are the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, where there continues to be ongoing high level transmission. The CDC has also recently added the country of Mali to the list of countries from which travelers should be monitored. Travel-related cases of Ebola and secondary transmission to health care workers who cared for the travel related cases have been reported in Europe and in Dallas, TX. Additionally, a healthcare worker treating patients in West Africa became ill after returning to the United States and was successfully treated.

While the risk of transmission in Delaware is low, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is working to ensure that the appropriate screening tools and disease prevention strategies are used to further reduce any chance of transmission. These tools and strategies are based on the best currently available science, which tells us that **the** Ebola virus is only transmitted by infected patients who have symptoms. The risk of getting the disease through normal, everyday contact is low.

The Ebola Disease

At this time, there are no known persons in Delaware with the Ebola virus disease.

All persons who have had contact with an Ebola patient and are exhibiting symptoms of the Ebola virus should immediately call DPH, **which** will arrange transfer to a hospital. They should not visit a non-hospital physician or urgent care center. They should not use public **transportation**. Hospitals are equipped and their staff is trained to screen for and appropriately manage the presentation of persons who may have Ebola.

For persons who are considered at risk for Ebola but are *not* exhibiting symptoms, DPH has developed these protocols to help protect the health and safety of Delawareans while minimizing undue restriction on the movement of individuals.

Daily Monitoring of Low-Risk Patients

Effective Monday, October 27, DPH began daily monitoring of all travelers from the three affected West African countries, whether or not those people reported contact with known or suspected Ebola patients. Mali was added to the list of DPH monitored countries on November 17.

In coordination with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), DPH is receiving notice of all travelers from those West African countries including Mali. DPH is in daily contact with those persons to ask about their status and health, and will remain in daily contact throughout the 21-day period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons are provided a 24/7 contact number at which they can reach DPH epidemiologists should they develop symptoms or have any questions related to their monitoring.

Persons with no known or suspected contact with Ebola patients are categorized as “low risk.”

Direct Active Monitoring and Management of Patients at Some Risk

Most persons who have had direct or close contact with symptomatic Ebola patients are considered by the CDC to be at “some risk” of contracting Ebola. This would include health care workers who have had direct patient contact with a person who is symptomatic with **the** Ebola virus who appropriately uses personal protection equipment (PPE) at all times or were within households, health care treatment areas or community settings with a person with Ebola while the person had symptoms but with no exposure to bodily fluids and no provision of direct care to an Ebola patient.

Persons who are at some risk of the Ebola virus, but who do not report any symptoms of Ebola, should limit their activities during the **21-day** period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons will sign agreements outlining restrictions on their activities, such as refraining from attending meetings, using public transportation or other activities that would prevent them from maintaining arms’ length distance from others. They should not travel without approval from DPH.

These persons would receive direct, active monitoring by the Division of Public Health, including daily face-to-face visits or **online** communications by health care personnel.

Home Restrictions for High Risk Patients

Persons who have been in direct contact with symptomatic Ebola patients who cannot assure appropriate use of PPE at all times are considered by **the** CDC to be at high risk of Ebola. This would include persons who have been exposed to the blood or body fluids of a person with Ebola who was symptomatic, such as through a “needle stick” or other exposure. It may also include close family members who provided direct care to a symptomatic Ebola patient.

Persons at high risk shall remain at home at all times during the **21-day** period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons will receive direct, active monitoring by the Division of Public Health, including provision of health care and any basic necessities.

Summary

Although the threat of contracting the Ebola virus is very low, protecting Delawareans from this infectious disease requires vigilance, planning and public cooperation. The protocols above can help limit the spread of this disease if it presents in Delaware.

If you wish to discuss a suspected case, you may contact DPH at 888-295-5156, including evenings and weekends. If you have general questions, the CDC has a 24/7 line available for general questions on the Ebola virus and can be reached by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

For further Ebola information and resources visit the Delaware Public Health homepage: visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/index.html>