

Community Medicine Newsletter

Ebola Outbreak in West Africa Guidance on managing ill travelers returning from affected areas

We are alerting physicians to the ongoing Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak occurring in Western Africa. As of August 6, 2014, there have been 1779 cases and 961 deaths reported in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. Additional cases are expected.

Ebola virus disease

EVD is a severe, often fatal, acute viral infection that causes hemorrhagic fever in humans and animals.

Symptoms consist of sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), rash, impaired kidney and liver function, and in about 50% of cases, both internal and external bleeding.

Transmission of Ebola virus occurs through **direct contact** with infected animals, contact with blood, body fluids or tissues of infected persons, or contact with medical equipment that are contaminated with infected body fluids. The incubation period ranges from 2-21 days. People are only contagious once they begin to show symptoms. Treatment is supportive.

Assessment of febrile illness in returning travelers

The risk of Ebola infection in most travelers is considered extremely low. The vast majority of patients presenting with a **febrile illness and history of travel to affected areas** in the 21 days preceding their illness will have another infectious etiology.

EVD should be considered in the differential diagnosis of travelers returning from affected areas who present with **severe febrile illness, in particular those who had contact with a clinical or confirmed case of Ebola, or worked in a lab handling the Ebola virus.** These patients should be sent to local ED for appropriate diagnostic workup and management.

Please call the on call Medical Health Officer (604-527-4893) for investigating and managing all suspect cases of EVD while they are present in your office.

Strict infection control practices should be implemented for any suspect case. These include: isolating the infected individuals preferably in a room away from other patients and using personal protective equipment (gloves, gowns, surgical or procedure mask, and eye protection such as goggles or face shield). Transmission to health care workers has occurred only where basic infection control practices have been breached.

Information on Ebola virus disease, including symptoms, prevention, and treatment is available at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/vhf-fvh/ebola-eng.php>.

More information on the outbreaks can be found on the World Health Organization's Global Alert and Response website: <http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/ebola/en/>.

Best regards,



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