

CARPHA INTERIM GUIDANCE ABOUT EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE FOR HOTELS AND GUESTHOUSES IN THE CARIBBEAN

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This document provides information on Ebola virus disease (EVD) prevention and preparedness for hotels and guesthouses in the Caribbean.

This information is based on currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion and is subject to change as relevant new information becomes available. It should be read in conjunction with relevant national legislation, regulations and policies. This document has been adapted and prepared for the Caribbean situation, and therefore may differ from guidance available from other agencies.

Background

The 2019 EVD epidemic is the world's second largest in history. As of August 21, 2019, a total of 2,829 confirmed, 94 probable, and suspected cases of EVD have been reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically the North Kivu and Ituri provinces.¹ A total of 1965 deaths have been reported, with 880 survivors.¹ Up to date case counts and further information on the ongoing outbreaks in Africa can be found on the World Health Organization (WHO) website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/ebola/drc-2019>

What is Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)?

EVD is a severe acute viral illness. Symptoms of EVD can appear 2 to 21 days after exposure to the virus, but the average is 8-10 days.² Symptoms usually begin suddenly with fever, sore throat, chills, headache and muscle pain and weakness. Following the initial symptoms, additional symptoms may include rash, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and internal and external bleeding.² Based on past outbreaks, an average of 50% of people infected with EVD die, but this has ranged from 25 to 90%.³

EVD can be transmitted through direct contact with:⁴

- Blood or body fluids (e.g., urine, saliva, sweat, faces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola.
- Objects (e.g., needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus.
- Infected animals (e.g., bats, primates) in the affected countries

Ebola is NOT spread through the air or by water, mosquitoes or consumption of properly cooked food. However, in Africa Ebola may be spread by handling bush meat.⁴

Only individuals infected with Ebola virus who are symptomatic can transmit the disease. Conversely, persons who are infected with Ebola virus, but not yet symptomatic, are not infectious and do not transmit the disease.

What can Hotels and Guesthouses do to be prepared for EVD?

To date, there have been **NO** reported cases of EVD in the Caribbean region.

There are no animal carriers of the Ebola virus in the Caribbean.

The likelihood of a case being imported to the Caribbean remains low. An article published October 2014 in the Lancet that looked at the potential for international dissemination of EVD via commercial air travel showed no Caribbean countries were listed as the final destination countries of individuals departing from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone.⁵

Although the likelihood is low that a case will be identified in a hotel or guesthouse in the Caribbean, there are measures that hotels/guesthouses can do to be prepared:

- Stay informed about the EVD situation in your country.
- Provide staff with educational materials on EVD so that they are aware of the signs and symptoms, where EVD is occurring as well as transmission routes.
- Ensure that staff know who to contact in the local public health authority in your country, as well as first responders and healthcare providers, if they have any questions or concerns.
- Ensure staff are informed about procedures for reporting guests or other staff with symptoms and exposure history compatible with EVD to the relevant health authorities in your country.
 - Guests or staff suspected to have been exposed to EVD, who have symptoms consistent with the disease, should be reported **immediately** to the National Public Health authorities.
- Procedures should be in place in the hotel/guesthouse for separating ill guests/staff from the rest of the hotel/guesthouse population and for minimizing the exposure of guests/staff to potentially contaminated environments while awaiting the arrival of Public Health authorities.
- Should a suspect case be identified in the hotel/guesthouse staff should NOT undertake an environmental cleaning of the guest's room, as it requires appropriate training and protective equipment. Public Health authorities will manage the cleaning and disinfection of the environment in which the guest was staying.
- Staff should always practice general infection control measures for the prevention of any communicable diseases, such as frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

CARPHA will continue to evaluate new information as it becomes available and will update this guidance as needed.

REFERENCES

1. Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo : Health Emergency Update– Aug 23, 2019. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/ebola/drc-2019>
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3. World Health Organization. Ebola virus disease. Modified May, 2019. Available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Ebola Transmission. Modified Oct 22, 2014. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/index.html>
5. Bogoch II, Creatore MI, Cetron MS, Brownstein JS, Pesik N, Miniota J, et al. Assessment of the potential for international dissemination of Ebola virus via commercial air travel during the 2014 west African outbreak. The Lancet, Early Online Publication, 21 October 2014; doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61828-6.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM EBOLA-AFFECTED COUNTRIES IS LOW-RISK HERE IS WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHILE TRAVELLING

If you develop a fever and Ebola symptoms yourself promptly inform airline personnel.

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fever, weakness, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat; followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding.

AT AIRPORTS AND AT YOUR DESTINATION

DO NOT touch the body of a person who has died from Ebola.

Use alcohol rub throughout the day. When hands are visibly dirty use soap and water.

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Seek prompt medical attention if you have Ebola symptoms.