

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 2014 EVD epidemic is the largest in history. As of November 4, 2014 a total of 13,268 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases of EVD have been reported from six affected countries (Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Spain, and the United States of America) and two previously affected countries (Nigeria and Senegal).¹ There is currently only widespread and intense transmission in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A total of 4960 deaths have been reported.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:
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/situation-reports/en/>

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, faeces, 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. A recently published article (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

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