

# **CARPHA INTERIM GUIDANCE ABOUT EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE FOR TRAVELLERS**

November 12, 2014

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This document provides information on Ebola virus disease (EVD) prevention and preparedness for:

- I. Travellers coming to the Caribbean
- II. Travellers arriving or returning to the Caribbean from an EVD affected country
- III. Travellers going to an EVD affected country

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).<sup>1</sup> There is currently only widespread and intense transmission in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A total of 4960 deaths have been reported.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Based on past outbreaks, an average of 50% of people infected with EVD die, but this has ranged from 25 to 90%.<sup>3</sup>

EVD can be transmitted through direct contact with:<sup>4</sup>

- 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.<sup>4</sup>

**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.**

## **Section I. Guidance for travellers coming to the Caribbean**

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.<sup>5</sup>

**Since there have been no cases of EVD in the Caribbean, there are no special precautions travellers need to take when travelling to the Caribbean.** Travellers are advised to:

- Stay informed about the EVD situation in any countries they are travelling to.
- Practice general infection control measures, such as frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Travellers coming to the Caribbean from an Ebola affected country will undergo exit screening on departure, and may face travel restrictions in some Caribbean countries (*see Section II*).

## **Section II. Guidance for Travellers arriving or returning to the Caribbean from an Ebola affected country**

Travellers arriving or returning to the Caribbean from an Ebola affected country may face travel restrictions and special screening measures in Caribbean countries. Travellers are advised to:

- Seek information on any travel restrictions or special screening measures for the countries they will be visiting **BEFORE** travelling. These may include travel bans\*, non-issuance of visas and/or quarantine measures.

*\*As of October 24, 2014, ten countries have individually introduced travel bans, which differ between each other for persons from affected countries or of certain nationalities. The region is now moving towards harmonizing the approach to travelers to/from affected countries.*

### **When travelling from a country with reported cases of EVD travellers should:**

1. NOT travel if you have a fever, or other symptoms of EVD. Consult healthcare services immediately for medical assessment.
2. Seek medical attention if you develop symptoms of EVD during travel and mention your travel history.
  - a. If you have symptoms during travel or upon arrival into a Caribbean country or territory, tell a flight attendant immediately, OR a port health officer OR a border services officer when you arrive. They will determine whether you need further medical assessment.
3. Monitor your health upon your return or entry into the Caribbean from a country affected by the Ebola outbreak.
  - a. Take and record your temperature twice daily with a thermometer.
  - b. Seek medical attention immediately, if a fever and/or any other symptoms arise within 21 days after your arrival in the Caribbean.
  - c. Contact the medical care facility by phone before your visit, in order to enable healthcare personnel to prepare adequately for your arrival.
  - d. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider that you have travelled to a region where Ebola virus disease was present. Make sure to tell them about the activities or work you participated in and whether there was contact with a known or suspected Ebola case, or a person with an unknown illness.

*[Note: See Appendix A and B for useful infographics prepared by the WHO and CDC]*

### **Section III. Guidance for Travellers going to an Ebola affected country**

**At this time, CARPHA advises against any non-essential travel to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.**

If you must travel to an Ebola affected country, the following preventive measures will help to reduce your risk of getting infected.

*[Note: See Appendix A for a useful infographic prepared by the WHO].*

#### **Before you travel:**

- Seek information about the current EVD situation and remain aware of up-to-date information.
- Assemble a travel health kit including a thermometer.

**While you are in an area with reported cases of EVD:**

1. Avoid areas with outbreaks. Follow directives issued by the local Ministry of Health and/or World Health Organization.
2. Avoid direct contact with blood and other bodily fluids:
  - a. Avoid direct contact with bodies of people who died of Ebola virus disease or unknown illnesses.
  - b. Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
  - c. Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
  - d. Avoid contact with any objects, such as needles, that have been contaminated with blood or bodily fluids.
  - e. Avoid unprotected sexual activity with an infected person or a person recovering from Ebola virus disease
3. Avoid close contact with or handling of animals.
  - a. Avoid live or dead animals, as both can spread the virus. Animals such as chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelope, pigs, porcupines, and fruit bats may be carriers.
  - b. Avoid handling or eating raw or undercooked meat.
4. Practice strict and frequent hand washing routines with soap and water at all times.
5. Know the symptoms of Ebola virus disease and seek medical care immediately if you develop fever, joint pain, muscle pain, headache, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhoea or any other severe symptoms during travel in an area with Ebola cases. A number of other diseases, such as malaria, dengue, typhoid and other viral hemorrhagic fevers have similar symptoms, and will need to be excluded.
6. If you are a healthcare worker, or working in a healthcare setting, you are at higher risk and should adhere to strict infection prevention and control measures.
  - a. Health care workers should practice strict infection control measures including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (i.e., gowns, masks, goggles, gloves and shoe covers) when providing care for suspect or confirmed cases.
  - b. In addition to routine practices for all patients, precautions for contact, droplet and aerosol generating procedures are recommended.
  - c. Strict observance of hand hygiene.
  - d. Patients with suspected Ebola should be isolated for treatment.

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

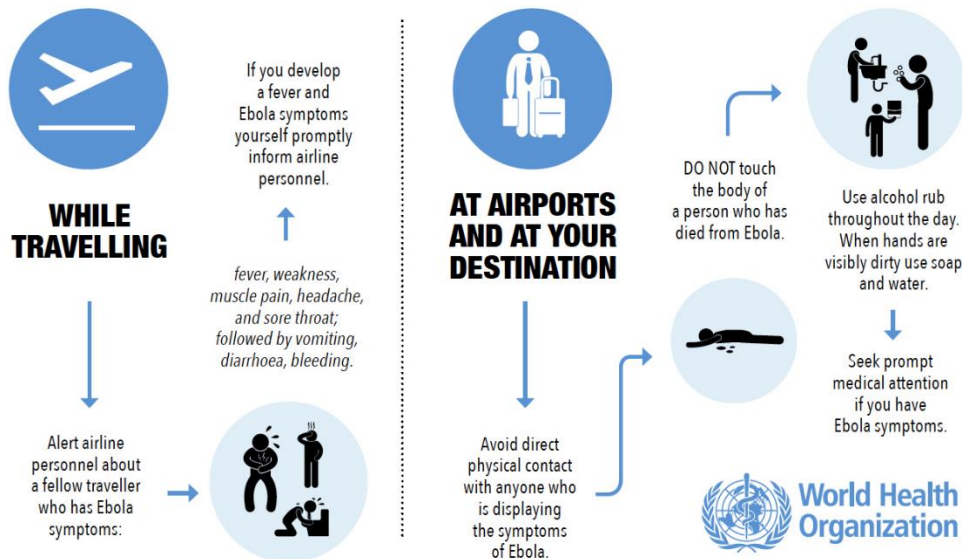
## References

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2. Public Health Agency of Canada. Ebola Symptoms. Modified Oct 16, 2014. Available from: <http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/ebola/symptoms-symptomes-eng.php>
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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.

## Appendix A

The following infographics from the WHO and CDC illustrate, in summary form, the key points to keep in mind when travelling to and from countries affected by the current Ebola Outbreak

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



Available from: [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/who\\_ebola\\_infographicsforairports\\_180814\\_final.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/who_ebola_infographicsforairports_180814_final.pdf)

### HEALTH ADVISORY: EBOLA

#### Recently in West Africa?

If you get sick, call a doctor.

Tell the doctor where you traveled.

Watch for fever, headaches, and body aches in the next 3 weeks.

3 WEEKS						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

For more information: visit [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) or call 800-CDC-INFO.

CDC

Available from: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/ebola-inbound-infographic>