

Main Messages: Ebola Facts, Readiness, Low Risk

- Ebola is spread through contact with the blood, or body fluids like urine, vomit, saliva, or feces of someone who is infected and actively showing symptoms. It is not spread through the air, water, or food.
- Identifying and preventing the spread of infectious disease is something that we in the healthcare and public health fields are well versed in.
- Even with the case that has occurred in Texas, the risk to our community remains very low.

Ebola Facts

- The virus can be transmitted through direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected person, and exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions.
- The viruses that cause Ebola are often spread through families and friends because they come in close contact with infectious secretions when caring for ill persons.
- Exposure to Ebola can occur in health care settings where hospital staff are not wearing appropriate protective equipment, such as masks, gowns, and gloves.
- Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola though 8-10 days is most common.
- Signs and symptoms may include: fever, rash, joint and muscle aches, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite, rash, sore throat, cough, chest pain, difficulty swallowing, difficulty breathing and bleeding inside and outside of the body.
- The natural reservoir of Ebola virus has not yet been proven, but scientists believe the first patient becomes infected through contact with an infected animal.

Preparedness and Awareness

- We practice infection control and conduct disease investigations everyday – no matter what the illness is or where it comes from.
- We diligently work with our healthcare and public health partners to be prepared for public health threats and have protocols in place at every level to protect the health and safety of the public.
- Contact investigations are something done all the time in our community for diseases like tuberculosis, whooping cough, and sexually transmitted infections. A contact investigation is the process used to identify anyone who may have been exposed if someone becomes ill in our community.
- Local first response, healthcare, and public health agencies are paying very close attention to this situation, in constant contact with one another, and monitoring our healthcare system very closely for anything suspicious.
- The CDC has been preparing for the possibility of cases in the U.S. and have provided state health, first response, county health, and hospital organizations with guidance and tools to deal with a case in our community.

Risks

- Pima County has a low occurrence of international travelers from affected regions in Africa.
- A person must be symptomatic in order to spread or transmit the disease.
- A person must have direct contact with an infected, symptomatic person's body fluids.
- Unlike the public health systems in the affected regions of West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leon, Guinea), the infection control practices and disease investigation capabilities work closely and effectively every day.

Diagnosis

- If there is reason to believe a person has Ebola, the patient is isolated and public health professionals notified.
- Samples from the patient can then be collected and tested by a specialized laboratory to confirm infection.

Treatment

- Standard treatment for Ebola is limited to supportive therapy: this includes treating the symptoms, balancing the patient's fluids and electrolytes, and treating complicating infections.

Prevention

- The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to monitor the evolution of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa.
- Isolation of Ebola HF patients from contact with unprotected persons.
- Use infection-control measures (such as complete equipment sterilization and routine use of disinfectant) wearing of protective clothing (such as masks, gloves, gowns, and goggles).