



What First Responders Need to Know About Ebola

Key Messages About Ebola

- The risk of contracting Ebola is very low in Onondaga County and in the United States unless a person has direct, unprotected contact with an Ebola patient's body fluids.
- Asking about recent travel history and using proper personal protective equipment (PPE) ensures the safety of first responders.

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a rare disease that has caused outbreaks in West Africa. Right now, there is a large Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The number of affected countries may increase.

How does Ebola spread?

Ebola spreads from person to person by direct contact with a patient's body fluids: sweat, saliva, mucus, blood, vomit, urine, feces, breast milk, and semen. Infected objects like needles, can also spread it. Ebola can also spread after death, through the handling of an infected corpse, linens, mattresses, and/or other infected objects.

Patients can spread the virus while they have a fever or other symptoms. The virus gets into the body through broken skin or mucus membrane. **People who do not show any symptoms do not spread the virus. Ebola does not spread through the air, food, water, mosquitoes, or other insects.** Only mammals, like humans, bats, apes, and monkeys have been infected with Ebola.

What are the symptoms of Ebola?

It takes 8-10 days for most people to show symptoms but it can range from 2-21 days. Ebola can cause the following symptoms: severe headaches, fever of 100.5⁰ or higher, weakness or muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach or muscle pain, lack of appetite, unexplained blood loss or bleeding, delirium, and erratic behavior.

How is Ebola treated?

There is no specific medication, treatment, or vaccine for Ebola. Treatment consists of giving fluids and managing any serious health problems that occur so the infected person can fight the virus.

Does Ebola pose a health risk to Onondaga County?

Currently, there have been no cases in Onondaga County. Therefore, the risk of Ebola is very low unless a person has direct unprotected contact with an Ebola patient's body fluids. Using effective infection control practices, like wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) helps to prevent the spread of illness. PPE consists of using gloves, facemask, eye protection, gown, and other items including disposable shoe covers and leg coverings as well as double gloves.

When should first responders wear PPE?

PPE should be donned before entering the scene if the 9-1-1 operator alerts you of a suspected Ebola case. You should also wear PPE if someone shows symptoms and is at a higher risk of being infected with Ebola. These risk factors include a fever and travel from Guinea, Sierra Leone, or Liberia. They may be at risk for Ebola for 21 days after leaving these areas. It is critical to ask symptomatic patients about their risk factors for Ebola within the past three weeks;

- **Resides in or has travelled from a country where any Ebola outbreak is happening**
- **Contact with blood or other body fluids of a patient known or suspected to have Ebola**

How can suspected or confirmed Ebola patients be transported safely?

First responders involved in air or ground transfer of Ebola patients should wear recommended PPE. Alert the receiving hospital you are transporting a suspected Ebola patient so they can prepare the correct infection control precautions before the patient arrives.

What should first responders do if they are exposed to body fluids with suspected or confirmed Ebola?

Stop working right away and wash the affected skin with soap and water. Mucus membranes should be irrigated with a large amount of water or eyewash solution. Contact occupational health for assessment and access to post exposure services. Get medical evaluation and follow up care, including fever monitoring twice a day for 21 days, after the last known exposure.

Will first responders be alerted if an Ebola case is confirmed in Onondaga County?

Yes, the Onondaga County Health Department will notify first responders if an Ebola case is confirmed.

For more information, visit:

Guidance on Air Medical Transport for Patients with Ebola Virus Disease

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/guidance-air-medical-transport-patients.html>

Guidance for Safe Handling of Human Remains of Ebola Patients in U.S. Hospitals and Mortuaries

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/ebola/docs/ems/guidance_for_safe_handling_of_human_remains Ebola.pdf

Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for Management of Patients with Known or Suspected Ebola Virus Diseases in the United States

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-emergency-medical-services-systems-911-public-safety-answering-points-management-patients-known-suspected-united-states.html>

Detailed Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Checklist for Ebola Preparedness

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/ebola/docs/ems/ems_checklist Ebola_preparedness.pdf