

EducAid Position Statement on Recent Cases of Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever in Guinea and Sierra Leone

Ebola hemorrhagic fever (Ebola HF) is a Viral Haemorrhagic Fever. It is a severe, often fatal disease in humans and nonhuman primates (such as monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees).

President Ernest Bai Koroma has declared a state of emergency in response to the current outbreak of Ebola HF in West Africa. **It is essential that all students and staff adhere to official guidance issued by the Sierra Leonean Government that is aimed at controlling the spread of Ebola HF during the state of emergency.**

Volunteers

Volunteers must follow the advice issued by the UK government and the World Health Organisation:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sierra-leone>
<http://www.who.int/ith/updates/20140421/en/>

These sites are updated frequently and must be consulted prior to travel to Sierra Leone.

Staff and students in Sierra Leone

How are Ebola viruses spread between humans?

- direct contact with the blood or secretions (including saliva and sweat) of an infected person
- exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions

The viruses that cause Ebola HF are often spread through families and friends because they come in close contact with infectious secretions when caring for ill persons.

What are the signs and symptoms of Ebola HF?

Typically: fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite

Some patients experience: rash, red eyes, hiccups, cough, sore throat, chest pain, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, bleeding inside and outside of the body.

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to ebolavirus though 8-10 days is most common. **Contact a senior member of staff if a case is suspected.**

James Boardman 30th May 2014, update 31st July 2014

Sources: Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, UK Government, WHO

How can human to human transmission be prevented?

Travellers or residents in the affected areas of countries can minimize risk of getting infected if they avoid:

- Contact with blood or bodily fluids of a person or corpse infected with the Ebola virus
- Contact with or handling of wild animals, alive or dead or their raw or undercooked meat
- Having sexual intercourse with a sick person or a person recovering from EVD for at least 7 weeks
- Having contact with any object, such as needles, that has been contaminated with blood or bodily fluids

When cases of Ebola HF are suspected or confirmed:

- Isolate Ebola HF patients from contact with unprotected persons
- Wear protective clothing (such as masks, gloves, gowns) if contact with the affected person is essential

The aim of these techniques is to avoid contact with the blood or secretions of an infected patient. **If a patient with Ebola HF dies, it is equally important that direct contact with the body of the deceased patient be prevented by prompt burial of the deceased.**