
Ebola virus disease (EVD)

Summary

- Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a rare disease that is life-threatening.
 - There have been no confirmed cases of EVD reported in Australia. There is no evidence that it is present in Australian animals.
 - If you are travelling or have travelled in an affected country and feel unwell, seek immediate medical assistance.
 - EVD is a notifiable disease. The Department of Health and Human Services must be contacted immediately if a case is suspected by a health professional in Victoria.
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Ebola virus disease (Ebola or EVD) is a rare disease that causes severe symptoms and can be life-threatening. It belongs to a family of viruses that cause viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF). It has also been called Ebola haemorrhagic fever.

Fruit bats are considered to be the natural host of Ebola viruses, with outbreaks amongst other species such as chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys and forest antelope from time to time.

Ebola is introduced into the human population through close contact with the blood, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals, alive or dead. The virus can spread from person to person through contact with bodily fluids, including blood and waste products.

There have been no confirmed cases of Ebola ever reported in Australia and there is no evidence that it is present in Australian animals.

Ebola virus disease outbreaks

There have been many Ebola outbreaks in Africa since the virus was first identified. The first outbreaks of Ebola occurred in 1976 in Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Between 2014 and 2016, a large outbreak of Ebola was reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa, however there is no longer active transmission in these areas.

In 2018 an outbreak has been identified in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Regular **updates on current Ebola outbreaks** are available on the World Health Organisation (WHO) website.

The Australian Government Department of Health has issued **health advice about Ebola**.

Symptoms of Ebola virus disease

People with Ebola are not known to be infectious until they develop symptoms. Symptoms caused by Ebola will usually appear within two to 21 days, and more commonly eight to 10 days, of a person being infected. They include:

- fever
- muscle and joint aches
- weakness
- headache.

Sometimes, the next symptoms may include:

- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- raised rash
- malfunction of the liver and kidneys.

Some cases present with internal and external bleeding, and may progress to multi-organ failure and death.

Risk of contracting Ebola virus disease

People who are living in or travelling to affected areas of Africa may be at risk of infection. The risk of infection with Ebola is extremely low, unless there has been direct exposure to the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person or animal, alive or dead, including unprotected sexual contact with people who have had a diagnosis of Ebola confirmed, up to three months after they have recovered.

If you are travelling in an affected country and you feel unwell, seek immediate medical attention.

If you have returned from travel in an affected country and you feel unwell, seek immediate medical assistance and tell your doctor where you have been, or mention if you know that you have been in contact with someone who has had Ebola.

The risk of a case being imported to Australia from the affected countries is low, partly due to the very low numbers of people who travel between Australia and the affected regions.

Diagnosis of Ebola virus disease

Ebola is diagnosed by finding genetic material from the virus in a person's blood, throat swab or urine.

Prevention of Ebola virus disease

There is currently no widely-available vaccine to prevent Ebola, however trials of a potential new vaccine are currently underway.

If you are travelling to an affected area, avoid direct exposure to the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person or animal (alive or dead).

If you are travelling to affected areas to work or volunteer in a healthcare setting, seek advice, and make sure you are fully informed about infection control procedures and recommendations.

Regulations on reporting of infectious diseases

Ebola is a notifiable disease and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services must be contacted immediately if a case is suspected by a health professional in Victoria.

A single case of Ebola or any of the viral haemorrhagic fevers would be considered an outbreak and requires immediate clinical and public health control to be put in place.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Your hospital emergency department
- **Communicable Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit**, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government Tel. **1300 651 160**
- **Smartraveller**, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Travel Advice Tel. **1300 555 135** from within Australia, or **+61 2 6261 3305** from overseas

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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