

**Imperial County
Public Health Department**

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PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

Date: October 3, 2014

Subject: Evaluating Cases for Ebola Virus: CDC Recommendations for Health-care Personnel

The first known case of Ebola with illness onset and laboratory confirmation in the United States occurred in Texas, during September 2014, in a traveler from Liberia.

The West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea are experiencing the largest Ebola epidemic in history. From March 24, 2014, through September 23, 2014, there have been 6,574 total cases (3,626 were laboratory-confirmed) and 3,091 deaths reported in Africa.

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of four viruses (Ebolavirus genus) that cause disease in humans. Ebola infection is associated with fever of greater than 101.5°F (38.6°C), and additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage.

Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with blood or body fluids (including but not limited to urine, saliva, feces, vomit, sweat, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola or contact with objects (such as needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with these fluids. Ebola is not spread through the air or water. The main source for spread is human-to-human transmission. Avoiding contact with infected persons (as well as potentially infected corpses) and their blood and body fluids is of paramount importance. Individuals are not contagious before they are symptomatic. The incubation period (the time from exposure until onset of symptoms) is typically 8-10 days, but can range from 2-21 days.

Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>

Recommendations

Early recognition is critical to controlling the spread of Ebola virus. Health-care personnel should elicit the patient's travel history and consider the possibility of Ebola in patients who present with fever, myalgia, severe headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, or unexplained bleeding or bruising. Should the patient report a history of recent travel to one of the affected West African countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea) *and* exhibit such symptoms, immediate action should be taken. The Ebola algorithm for the evaluation of a returned traveler and the checklist for evaluation of a patient being evaluated for Ebola are available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/ebola-algorithm.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/checklist-patients-evaluated-us-evd.pdf>

Patients in whom a diagnosis of Ebola is being considered should be isolated in a single room (with a private bathroom), and health-care personnel should follow standard, contact, and droplet precautions, including the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Infection control personnel and the local health department should be immediately contacted for consultation.

The following guidance documents provide additional information about clinical presentation and clinical course of Ebola virus disease, infection control, and patient management:

- Guidelines for clinicians in U.S. healthcare settings are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/clinician-information-us-healthcare-settings.html>.
- Guidelines for infection prevention control for hospitalized patients with known or suspected Ebola in U.S. hospitals are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/infection-prevention-and-control-recommendations.html>
- Guidelines for safe management of patients with Ebola in U.S. hospitals are at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/patient-management-us-hospitals.html>

The case definitions for persons under investigation for Ebola, probable cases, and confirmed cases, as well as classification of exposure risk levels are at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/case-definition.html>

Persons at highest risk of developing infection are:

- those who have had direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an individual diagnosed with Ebola. This includes any person who provided care for an Ebola patient, such as a health-care provider or family member not adhering to recommended infection control precautions (i.e., not wearing recommended PPE
- those who have had close physical contact with an individual diagnosed with Ebola
- those who lived with or visited the Ebola-diagnosed patient while he or she was ill.

Persons who have been exposed, but who are asymptomatic, should be instructed to monitor their health for the development of fever or symptoms for 21 days after the last exposure. Guidelines for monitoring and movement of persons who have been exposed to Ebola are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>

Diagnostic tests are available for detection of Ebola. The Imperial County Public Health Laboratory will provide guidance on the collection and transport of specimens, and will prepare and ship all specimens to the appropriate lab for testing. Guidance has been provided to hospital laboratory personnel. For more information, contact the Public Health Laboratory at (760) 482-4437.

Information about diagnostic testing for Ebola can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-specimen-collection-submission-patients-suspected-infection-ebola.html>

Health-care personnel should immediately contact the local Public Health Department regarding any person being evaluated for Ebola if the medical evaluation suggests that diagnostic testing may be indicated. If there is a high index of suspicion, Public Health will immediately report any probable cases or persons under investigation to the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Emergency Operations Center.

Please report suspected cases immediately to the Public Health Department by calling (760) 482-4723. To report cases after hours or on weekends, contact the Duty Officer or send an email to phepireport@co.imperial.ca.us

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