

### Can people get Ebola from animals?

Yes, but not in South Africa. Ebola is spread to humans from some animals like bats and monkeys. People can catch the disease touching or eating a sick or dead animal. This is how the outbreak started in West Africa. Now that Ebola is in the human population it is being spread from human to human. There are no animals in South Africa that carry Ebola. The only way Ebola can be transmitted here is through contact with an infected person.

### Who is at risk of getting Ebola?

Health workers and family members or friends who are in close contact with people with Ebola are at the highest risk of getting the disease. Because Ebola does not move through the air, you have a very low risk of getting the disease if you do not have direct contact with someone with Ebola.

### What are the signs and symptoms of Ebola?

Ebola causes sudden high fever, extreme tiredness, headache, body pain and loss of appetite. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, a rash, damaged kidney and liver and internal and external bleeding. If you have a sudden high fever after contact with a person with Ebola, contact the nearest health facility immediately.

### How can you protect yourself from Ebola?

- Do not touch a sick person with suspected Ebola
- Do not touch the soiled clothes, towels and bed linens or any bodily fluids of a sick person with suspected Ebola
- During an Ebola outbreak, do not touch any people if it is not necessary
- If you are a health worker or are involved in burying bodies you should wear protective clothing when you handle patients and dead bodies
- Do not have unprotected sex
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water after every social contact

### What is the treatment for Ebola?

There is no approved treatment for Ebola. People suffering from Ebola are treated for symptoms. Experimental treatment has been tested in animals and health workers from the United States of America, but this treatment is not approved for general use.

Is it true that if you recover from Ebola you cannot get it again?

Yes. If you have recovered from Ebola you cannot get the same strain of Ebola again. You can no longer infect others.

### What can you do to control the spread of Ebola?

If you or someone you know have been in contact with someone with Ebola and have the symptoms, contact your nearest health facility immediately.

You can also help to educate everyone around you: your neighbours, friends, colleagues, family members and others.

### Has there ever been an Ebola case or outbreak in South Africa?

There has only been one imported case of Ebola in South Africa. In 1996, a Gabonese doctor working with Ebola patients in Libreville, Gabon, was admitted to a hospital in Johannesburg. A nurse caring for the patient became infected and died.



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# What is Ebola?

Ebola virus disease (EVD) was previously known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever. It is a serious, often deadly disease in humans. In parts of Africa it also occurs in primates (monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees) and other animals.

Ebola is caused by a virus, and first appeared in 1976 when two outbreaks (one in an area near the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the other in South Sudan) occurred. Since then, erratic outbreaks have occurred, most commonly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, South Sudan, Congo and Gabon. The origin of the Ebola virus is not known, but fruit bats are thought to be the likely host of the virus.

**Symptoms of Ebola**

**Systemic**

- Fever
- Lack of appetite
- Internal bleeding

**Muscular**

- Aches
- Weakness

**Joints**

- Aches

**Intestines**

- Diarrhea

**Pharynx and lungs**

- Hiccups
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty swallowing

**Chest pain**

**Stomach**

- Pain
- Vomiting

**Skin**

- Rash
- Bleeding

### **Do we have any cases of Ebola in South Africa?**

No. To date, there are no Ebola cases in South Africa. To prevent Ebola from entering or spreading in South Africa, the National Department of Health has issued a travel advisory. This advisory applies to all travellers coming to or leaving South Africa to or from affected countries.

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### **Travelling to and from countries with Ebola**

In some cases it may be necessary for people to travel to these countries for diplomatic or official health or humanitarian missions or business that cannot be postponed. In these cases they must request permission to travel from the National Department of Health. Non-South Africans travelling from high risk countries will not be allowed into South Africa unless the travel is absolutely necessary. They will have to get permission from the National Department of Health before travelling.

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### **Who must I contact to get permission to travel to and from high risk countries?**

You must send a written request to the Director-General of Health, for the attention of Dr. Frew Benson to [Nathoc1@health.gov.za](mailto:Nathoc1@health.gov.za) and [Nathoc2@health.gov.za](mailto:Nathoc2@health.gov.za). You can call +27 12 395 9636 or + 27 12 395 9637 to get more information about your application.

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### **What must I include in my application to travel to and from high risk countries?**

**When you ask permission to travel you must submit:**

- a letter with the following information:
- your full personal details, including your residential address if you are a South African citizen or the address where you will be staying while in South Africa (e.g. the address of the hotel) if you are not a South African citizen
- the details of your next of kin if you are a South African citizen
- full details of the reasons for you travelling to or from the high risk countries
- a Travellers Health Questionnaire and a Travellers Information Form

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### **When must I submit my application to travel?**

At least five working days before you plan on travelling.

How will I know if my application has been successful?

You will receive a written reply from the National Department of Health to inform you if your application has been successful or not.

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### **What must I do when I travel in a high risk country?**

- avoid restricted areas
- practice careful hygiene. Avoid contact with blood and body fluids of sick people
- do not touch things that may have a sick person's blood or body fluids on it
- avoid funerals or burial rituals where you will have to handle the body of someone who has died from Ebola
- avoid contact with wild animals or with bush meat
- avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated
- the South African Embassy or consulate can give you advice on facilities that are best for your needs
- go to a doctor or medical facility immediately if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes
- limit your contact with other people when you go to the doctor

### **What happens if I get permission to visit South Africa from a high risk country?**

You will be screened according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations before you leave the high risk area. If you have a high fever you will not be allowed to leave for South Africa.

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### **What happens if I get permission to transit through South Africa?**

When you arrive in South Africa, airport security personnel will escort you to the transit facility. You will stay there until it is time for you to depart. You will be escorted to your aircraft to make sure you leave the country.

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### **What will happen when I return from my trip to a high risk country (South African citizens) or I get permission to visit South Africa from a high risk country (foreign nationals)?**

When you arrive in South Africa you will have to go through a careful screening and medical assessment before you are allowed to enter. You must hand in your completed Travellers Health Questionnaire and the approval letter you received from the National Department of Health to port health officials. If you have any Ebola symptoms, port health officials will take you to a clinic for further examination. If there is no clinic where you entered South Africa they will keep you in an area where you do not have contact with other people until emergency services arrive to examine or transport you. If you do not have Ebola symptoms, port health officials will give you health information on Ebola. The Department of Health will monitor you daily for a period of 21 days for any symptoms such as fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash or red eyes.

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### **What should I do when I go home?**

Monitor your health for 21 days if you were in an area with an Ebola outbreak. Call a doctor or medical facility immediately if you have a fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes. Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the examination/emergency room or surgery. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the room.

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### **What happens when I return from medium or low risk countries?**

If you show Ebola symptoms you will be isolated and examined for Ebola. If you do not show symptoms you will be cleared to follow the normal immigration procedures and will be given information on Ebola.

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## **About Ebola**

### **How does Ebola spread between people?**

Ebola enters your body through your mouth, nose and eyes, or a break in the skin. To catch Ebola, you must touch the bodily fluids of a person with Ebola and then with dirty hands touch your eyes or nose or mouth. Bodily fluids include sweat, stools, vomit, urine, semen, vaginal fluid and blood. A person who has died of Ebola is still highly infectious and should not be touched. It should only be handled by people who are trained in safe burial practices. The person's soiled clothes and bedding are contagious and must be burnt. Ebola can also be caught from a used razor at a barber shop, or when receiving an injection with a needle that has already been used, or if you are cut in a ceremony with a knife that has been used on someone that is infected. Ebola does not move through the air. You cannot get Ebola by talking to people, walking in the street or shopping in malls or markets.