



**Preserving Public Health in Delaware:
Monitoring and Managing Potential Ebola Virus Exposure**

The outbreak of Ebola virus disease in West Africa continues to unfold. Particularly impacted are the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, where there continues to be ongoing high level transmission. Travel-related cases of Ebola and secondary transmission to health care workers who cared for the travel related cases have been reported in Europe and in Dallas, TX. Most recently on October 23, Ebola was diagnosed in New York in a healthcare worker who recently returned after providing care to Ebola virus disease victims in Guinea.

While the risk of transmission in Delaware is low, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is working to ensure that the appropriate screening tools and disease prevention strategies are used to further reduce any chance of transmission. These tools and strategies are based on the best currently available science, which tells us that Ebola virus is only transmitted by infected patients who have symptoms. The risk of getting the disease through normal, everyday contact is low.

The Ebola Disease

At this time, there are no known persons in Delaware with the Ebola virus disease.

All persons who have had contact with an Ebola patient and are exhibiting symptoms of the Ebola virus should immediately call DPH who will coordinate transfer to a hospital. They should not visit a non-hospital physician or urgent care center. They should not use public transport. Hospitals are equipped and their staff is trained to screen for and appropriately manage the presentation of persons who may have Ebola.

For persons who are considered at risk for Ebola but are *not* exhibiting symptoms, DPH has developed these protocols to help protect the health and safety of Delawareans while minimizing undue restriction on the movement of individuals.

Daily Monitoring of Low Risk Patients

Recently, DPH began daily contact monitoring of all travelers from the three affected West African countries, whether or not those people report contact with individuals who are infected with the Ebola virus.

In coordination with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), DPH is receiving notice of all travelers from those West African countries. DPH is in daily contact with those persons to ask about their status and health, and will remain in daily contact throughout the 21-day period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons are provided a 24/7 contact number at which they can reach DPH epidemiologists should they develop symptoms or have any questions related to their monitoring.

Persons with no known direct contact with Ebola patients are categorized as “low risk.”

Direct Active Monitoring and Management of Patients at Some Risk

Most persons who have had direct or close contact with symptomatic Ebola patients are considered by the CDC to be at “some risk” of contracting Ebola. This would include health care workers who have had direct patient contact with a person who is symptomatic with Ebola virus who appropriately uses personal protection equipment (PPE) at all times.

Persons who are at some risk of the Ebola virus, but who do not report any symptoms of Ebola, should limit their activities during the 21 day period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons will sign agreements outlining restrictions of their activities, such as refraining from attending meetings, avoiding use of public transportation, and not engaging in activities that would put them in close, arms' length contact with others. They should not travel without approval from DPH.

These persons would receive direct, active monitoring by the Division of Public Health, including daily visits by public health personnel.

Home Restrictions for High Risk Patients

Persons who have been in direct contact with symptomatic Ebola patients who cannot assure appropriate use of PPE at all times are considered by CDC to be at high risk of Ebola. This would include persons who have been exposed to the blood or body fluids of a person with Ebola who was symptomatic, such as through a “needle stick” or other exposure. It may also include close family members who provided direct care to a symptomatic Ebola patient.

Persons at high risk shall remain at home at all times during the 21 day period following their last potential Ebola exposure. These persons will receive direct, active monitoring by the Division of Public Health, including provision of health care and any basic necessities.

Summary

Although the threat of contracting the Ebola virus is very low, protecting Delawareans from this infectious disease requires vigilance, planning and public cooperation. The protocols above can help limit the spread of this disease if it presents in Delaware.

If you wish to discuss a suspected case, you may contact DPH 24/7 at 888-295-5156, including weekends, and holidays. If you have general questions, the CDC has a 24/7 line available for information on the Ebola virus at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

For further Ebola information and resources visit the Delaware Public Health homepage: <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/index.html>