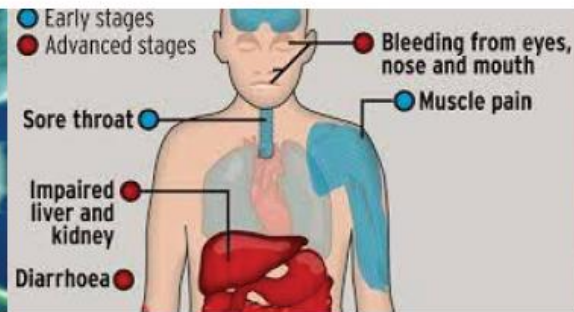


EBOLA FACT SHEET



What is Ebola Virus?

Ebola Virus causes a severe haemorrhagic (bleeding) illness. Since the virus was first discovered in 1976, it has caused small outbreaks in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Ivory Coast. It is currently the cause of a large outbreak in West Africa that started in December 2013. As of 7 August, 1711 people have been affected by the virus so far with 932 deaths. The outbreak is currently affecting Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone; and three cases have been reported in Nigeria.

How does Ebola Virus spread?

Although the exact origins of the virus are unknown, it is believed that people become infected through close contact with blood, secretions organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals. Ebola virus then spreads into the community by human to human contact. Ebola virus is not spread in the air. Infection results from close contact with a sick person infected with the virus. The virus can be spread through broken skin or mucous membranes (mouth, eyes and genitals) by:

- direct close contact with an infected person who is sick or who has died
- contact with the blood, secretions or bodily fluids of infected people
- contact with objects that are contaminated with the sick patient's body fluids

What are the symptoms of Ebola Virus Disease?

Ebola virus disease (EVD) causes a severe, acute illness with sudden onset of:

- high fever
- weakness, tiredness and muscles pains
- headache
- sore throat

These first symptoms may occur with many other illnesses e.g. malaria and the flu. These symptoms are then followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, and kidney and liver failure. In some cases the patient may start bleeding e.g. from the nose and mouth.

The incubation period (the time from contact with an infected person to the time that a person starts feeling sick) varies from 2-21 days.

What is the treatment for Ebola Virus Disease?

Unfortunately at the present time there is no specific treatment or vaccine available for Ebola. Severely sick patients are treated supportively. It is not known why some patients recover from the infection and others do not. Between 60-90% of those who become ill will die from the disease.

How is Ebola virus disease diagnosed?

To prevent the health care system being overwhelmed with people who are worried they might have the disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) put together a case definition for suspected cases:

Any person presenting with an acute onset of fever that has visited or been resident in Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone in the 21 days prior to the onset of illness

AND

Had direct contact or cared for suspected or confirmed Ebola virus disease cases in the 21 days prior to the onset of illness, or been hospitalised in Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone

OR

Has had unexplained multisystem illness that is malaria negative.

The diagnosis of Ebola is made by testing a patient's blood for antibodies and virus. This is done at a specialised facility that is set up with the equipment that is needed to do the blood testing. Ebola testing is only available for people who meet the case definition as outlined above.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Ebola?

Avoid contact with someone who is sick with suspected Ebola virus disease. Do not touch an infected person or their body fluids. Wash your hands often with soap or an alcohol-containing disinfectant.

The virus can spread quite rapidly from patient to patient or health care workers in a health care facility. Strict infection control measures need to be enforced when patients infected with Ebola are admitted to a health care facility.

Doctors, nurses, cleaners and anybody else who may come in contact with the patient or the patient's body fluids must wear protective clothing that consists of masks, gloves, gowns and goggles.

If someone dies of Ebola virus disease, direct contact with the body should be avoided.

What must I do if I suspect I may have Ebola Virus Disease?

Contact your local health care facility as soon as possible.

REFERENCES:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/fact-sheet.pdf>
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>