



**Ebola Virus:  
Fact Sheet and Questions/Suggested Responses  
(Source: Centers for Disease Control)**

**What is Ebola?**

Ebola is a virus that was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks among humans have appeared sporadically in Africa. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which affects a number of countries (Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, for example) has been classified as an epidemic and is the largest outbreak recorded to date.

**Are we in danger in Dallas?**

The United States recorded its first confirmed travel-related case of Ebola in Dallas on September 30, 2014. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the risk of Ebola spreading in this area and the U.S. is very low; appropriate actions are being taken to prevent such an occurrence. However, no FDA-approved vaccine for Ebola exists, so following proper protocols and administering proper treatment are necessary. Experimental vaccines and treatments are being developed, but they have not been fully tested yet for safety or effectiveness. The Dallas County Health and Human Services Department, along with other agencies, is addressing the public health issue, including case tracking to monitor persons who may have been exposed to the Ebola virus.

**How can you catch the Ebola virus?**

Ebola is spread by direct contact with blood and body fluids (such as urine, feces, saliva, vomit, sweat and semen), through broken skin or mucous membranes, from a person who is sick with the virus. The virus also can be spread through direct contact with objects – like needles – that are contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola.

You cannot get Ebola through the air; through water; or through food.

The disease is communicable only during the period that an infected person shows symptoms of the disease, according to the CDC.

### **How do I protect myself?**

The CDC advises:

- **DO** wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do **NOT** touch the blood or body fluids of people who are sick.
- Do **NOT** handle items that may have come in contact with a sick person's blood or body fluids, like clothes, bedding, needles or medical equipment.
- Do **NOT** touch the body of someone who has died of Ebola.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms of Ebola include:

- Fever (greater than 38.6 degrees Celsius or 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after a person is exposed to Ebola; the average is 8 to 10 days.

### **How can I tell the difference between influenza and Ebola?**

Many of the first symptoms of Ebola are similar to influenza, which appears more frequently during the fall and winter months. Anyone who exhibits those symptoms – fever greater than 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit, severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain or unexplained bleeding or bruising – should seek medical attention and talk with health care providers about their questions or concerns.

For more information, visit these sites:

**[Dallas County Health and Human Services Ebola Web page](#)**  
**[October 5, 2014: What You Need To Know About Ebola](#)**

**[Ebola Fact Sheet](#)**

**[CDC Ebola Website for Communication Resources including Posters and Banners](#)**