Ebola Virus Disease

Advice and risk assessment for childcare, school and college settings

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There is currently an outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurring in West Africa. It was first reported in March 2014 in Guinea and since late May has involved five countries to date: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali and Nigeria. The WHO officially declared Nigeria free of Ebola on 20/10/14. The WHO officially declared Liberia free of Ebola on 09/05/15.

There have been no cases in Ireland to date and the risk of Ebola virus disease arriving in Ireland is **very low.**

Ebola virus disease is a rare but serious viral infection, which is only transmitted by direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids (saliva, urine, stool, breast milk) and organs of an infected person. Unlike influenza, the virus is not spread through the air.

It remains unlikely, but not impossible, that a person infected in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone or Bamako, Mali could arrive in Ireland. The affected countries are introducing exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights. This is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidance and is one of many measures to reduce the risk of international spread of disease.

- the risk of Ebola virus disease arriving in Ireland is **very low**
- there have been several previous outbreaks of Ebola virus disease in Africa, but none have occurred in Europe
- transmission of Ebola virus disease from person to person is by direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an ill person with the disease. Unlike influenza, the virus is not spread through the air. Persons without symptoms do not transmit the infection.
- the time between contact with the infected person and the time that first symptoms appear (incubation period) of Ebola virus disease ranges from two to 21 days
- any child/student arriving back in Ireland having travelled from any of the affected countries, and who are without symptoms, are **not infectious** and there should be **no restrictions** on their childcare/school/college attendance or normal activities

The attached algorithm has been developed specifically to assist childcare, schools, and college settings who may have children/students/staff returning or visiting from affected countries.

All staff or those with contact with children/students should already be aware of what to do if a child/student falls ill and there is general guidance (referenced below) on infection control in childcare, school or college settings.

Further information about the Ebola virus disease outbreak can be found on the following websites:

HPSC:
Full information on Ebola virus disease is available at:
http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/Vectorborne/ViralHaemorrhagicFever/Ebola/
Ebola Travel Advice available at:

http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/Vectorborne/ViralHaemorrhagicFever/Ebola/TravelAdvice/

Management of Infectious Disease in Childcare Facilities and Other Childcare Settings and
Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools are available at:

http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/LifeStages/SchoolHealth/

WHO:
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/Ebola virus disease/en/index.html

Department of Foreign affairs and Trade travel advice:
https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/guinea/

https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/liberia/

https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/sierra-leone/

Ebola virus disease risk assessment in childcare/schools/ college settings

This algorithm is to inform the assessment of unwell children/students in childcare/schools/ college settings, and will assist the public health response and ensure the appropriate organisations are informed. If the child is unable to answer questions, please seek information from the responsible adult.

Does the child/student appear unwell? Symptoms to look out for include fever (eg pale skin, sweating or shivering), diarrhoea and vomiting, and weakness (eg unable to stand unsupported as appropriate for age)

→ If **no**, continue as normal

↓ If **yes**, ask these questions

Has the child/student arrived from an ebola affected country* (e.g. Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone or Bamako, Mali) or have they spent any time in these countries within the past 21 days?

→ If **no**, follow usual guidance for dealing with an unwell child/student

↓ If **yes**, ask the following questions

Immediate medical assessment is needed. Refer the child/student to the local healthcare providers as per normal procedures.

When referring them to the local services (GP/Emergency Dept./ ambulance/initial responders), phone in advance. Specify that the ill child/student has recently returned from an Ebola-affected country and a risk assessment is needed. This ensures that they know the situation and what needs to be done, including wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, if required.

While waiting for the parent/guardian/ambulance service/initial responders to arrive, the unwell child/student should be separated from other children/students/staff. Standard precautions should be applied.

Contact your local department of public health, which will assist with any subsequent public health action required. A list of departments of public health is available at: http://www.hpsc.ie/NotifiableDiseases/Whotonotify/File,13160,en.pdf