

# Interim advice for humanitarian aid workers (including healthcare workers) returning to or coming to Ireland following travel from an area affected by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak. Version 3.3 14.05.2015

## What is Ebola virus disease (EVD)?

Ebola is a severe, infectious, often-fatal disease in humans and nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees) caused by infection with Ebola virus. Ebola virus does not transmit through the air as influenza does. There is currently an extensive, ongoing outbreak of Ebola virus disease in **Guinea and Sierra Leone**.

## How is it spread?

The natural reservoir of the virus is unknown and it is not always clear how the virus first appears in humans. Usually the first person gets infected through contact with an infected animal.

## Ebola virus disease is transmitted by:

- Direct exposure to the blood or body fluids, of a dead or living infected person or animal
- Injury from needles and other sharp implements contaminated by the blood of a dead or living infected person or animal
- Direct exposure through broken skin or mucous membranes (e.g. in the mouth, under eyelids) to environments/items that have become contaminated with an Ebola patient's infectious fluids such as soiled clothing, bed linen, or used needles.
- Contact with body fluids includes unprotected sexual contact with an Ebola case up to three months after they have recovered.

## What is the incubation period?

The incubation period (the interval between being in contact with an infected person and developing symptoms of disease) varies between 2-21 days.

## What are the signs and symptoms of EVD?

Early signs and symptoms of EVD are:

- Fever
- Joint and muscle aches
- Headache
- Sore throat

These may then be followed by:

- Nausea and vomiting

- Progressive weakness
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhoea
- Skin rash
- Red eyes, hiccups and bleeding from body orifices may also be seen

### Can ebola virus survive in the environment?

Ebola viruses can survive in liquid or dried material for a number of days. However Ebola is inactivated by soap, machine washing at higher temperatures, heating for 60 minutes at 60°C or boiling for 5 minutes, household bleach and most disinfectants.

**NB:** Freezing or refrigeration will **not** inactivate Ebola virus.

### What activities are not dangerous?

If you have been in an affected country, it is important to bear in mind that Ebola is **not** transmitted by:

- Casual contact in public places with people who do not appear to be sick
- Handling money
- Handling groceries
- Swimming in a swimming pool
- Mosquitoes **do not transmit** the ebola virus.

### Do healthcare and aid workers returning from an Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) affected area pose a risk to patients, other staff or others in general?

Only people who are displaying symptoms of EVD pose any risk of infection. If someone has come from an EVD affected area and they are asymptomatic, they do not pose a risk to others. If the person had known contact with an EVD patient or the remains of someone who died of EVD, they should monitor themselves as set out in this information sheet. There is no quarantine for EVD contacts at present.

### Is there a register of healthcare workers and humanitarian aid workers?

Yes, the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and Departments of Public Health have asked the agencies who are sending humanitarian aid and healthcare workers to the affected countries to request their staff to complete a pre departure form, containing information on their home address, contact details, dates of departure and return. Shortly before the aid worker returns, the NGO/GOARN is asked to send a second form confirming his/her return date. This information will be maintained in a register held at HPSC.

## Will I need to be monitored?

When the aid worker returns to Ireland, HPSC will notify the Department of Public Health where the aid worker lives, of their return. On their return, his/her local Public Health doctor will make contact with him/her. If they do not make contact, please phone them (see details below). They will talk to the aid worker to see if he/she had any exposure to EVD while in the affected area. Following this risk assessment, the Public Health doctor will decide if any monitoring is needed. If monitoring is needed, they will make arrangements for this monitoring which will last for 21 days after last exposure.

## Should returning healthcare and aid workers from EVD affected areas be monitored?

If they have had a risk exposure, humanitarian aid workers and healthcare workers returning from working to contain the outbreak (whether in a healthcare facility or other capacity) should be monitored on their return. If they have not had a risk exposure, they will be given information and will not require monitoring.

## How do I contact my local Department of Public Health?

Contact details for the Departments of Public Health are as follows:

HSE area	Counties	Phone Number	
		Office Hours	Out-of-hours
East	Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow	01 635 2145	021 420 9848*
Midlands	Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath	057 935 9891	057 935 8165/6*
Midwest	Clare, Limerick and North Tipp	061 483 338	021 420 9848*
North East	Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan	046 907 6412	086 606 2537
North West	Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo	071 985 2900	087 953 7807
South East	Carlow, Kilkenny, S.Tipp, Waterford and Wexford	056 778 4142	1890 499199
South	Cork and Kerry	021 492 7601	021 4209 9848*
West	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon	091 775 200	094 906 3000*

\*Ambulance control - ask for Public Health in your county/region

## What does the monitoring involve?

The type of monitoring required depends on the type of contact that the healthcare or aid worker has had with EVD when in the affected countries. For detailed guidance see [here](#)

Those with low risk exposures who are not healthcare workers will be asked to take their temperature twice daily and to report to Public Health if they develop symptoms or a fever of  $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Non healthcare workers with high risk exposures and all healthcare workers will be monitored actively daily for fever or other EVD symptoms until 21 days after their last exposure. This means a phone call to the local Public Health doctor each day during the monitoring period. Those who are being monitored need to remain reachable by the Public Health doctor during this time. For healthcare workers who have had high risk exposures, they can attend office based work, but should not undertake clinical care or work in patient care areas during the monitoring period.

Further information on Ebola Virus Disease is available on the HPSC website, [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)  
[Information for healthcare professionals](#) [Information for the public](#)