

Advice for Humanitarian Aid Workers Traveling to Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, or Sierra Leone during the Ebola Outbreak

Current Situation


An outbreak of Ebola has been ongoing in West Africa since March 2014. This outbreak is affecting Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone and is the largest outbreak of Ebola in history. At least 3 Americans have been infected; 2 are health care workers who worked in an Ebola treatment center and the 3rd was caring for a family member with Ebola. Instances of civil unrest and violence against aid workers have been reported in West Africa as a result of the outbreak. The public health systems in the affected countries are being severely strained as the outbreak grows.

CDC is recommending that US residents avoid nonessential travel to Guinea (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-guinea>), Liberia (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-liberia>), and Sierra Leone (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-sierra-leone>). Cases of Ebola have recently been reported in Nigeria (</travel/notices/alert/ebola-nigeria>); CDC does not recommend against travel to Nigeria at this time but is closely monitoring the situation and will update the recommendation if needed. Since it is important that humanitarian aid work continue in the region, protect yourself by following CDC's advice for avoiding contact with the blood and body fluids of people who are sick with Ebola. For more information, visit 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/index.html>) on the CDC Ebola website (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>).

Recommendations for Humanitarian Aid Workers

If you are traveling to areas where outbreaks of Ebola (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>) are occurring, CDC recommends that you take precautions to protect your health and safety.

Before You Leave

- Learn about Ebola. For information, see CDC's Ebola website (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>).
- Schedule a visit with a travel medicine provider, ideally 4–6 weeks before you leave, to discuss recommendations for you based on your health history and your travel plans. Even if you are leaving sooner, a visit to a travel medicine doctor is still helpful. Your provider should ensure that you are up-to-date on routine vaccines, as well as provide any other vaccines, medicines, and information you may need for your destination (</travel/destinations/list>).
- Pack needed medical supplies and basic first aid items.
 - Put together a travel health kit (</travel/page/pack-smart>) containing items such as over-the-counter medications, a thermometer, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and basic first aid items.
 - If you will be working in a health care setting or may be in situations where you will have close contact with people who are sick with Ebola, ensure that your organization will be providing you with personal protection equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection. If your organization does not provide them, it is important for you to pack these items and bring them with you. Learn more about recommended PPE and other infection control procedures in the World Health Organization's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Care of Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Filovirus Haemorrhagic Fever in Health Care Settings, with a Focus on Ebola (<http://www.who.int/csr/resources/who-ipc-guidance-ebolafinal-09082014.pdf?ua=1>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>).
- Check your health insurance plan and any insurance benefits offered by your organization to ensure you are covered for health care abroad in the event of illness. Ask your organization

about their medical evacuation plans. CDC recommends you purchase travel health insurance and medical evacuation insurance if you are not fully covered by your personal health insurance or organization-issued plans. Information about medical evacuation services can be found on the US Department of State's [Air Ambulance/MedEvac/Medical Escort Providers](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html) (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html>) [Ⓜ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) page.

- Because we are facing the biggest and most complex Ebola outbreak in history, travel restrictions have been established that may affect you. See [Interim Guidance for Monitoring and Movement of Persons with Ebola Virus Disease Exposure](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>) to learn more about traveling if you have been exposed to Ebola.
- Health care resources in affected countries may be limited or not available. Before you leave, identify places you can get health care during your trip. The [US embassy](http://www.usembassy.gov/) (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>) [Ⓜ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) in the country you are going to can help you locate medical services.
- Register with the US embassy in your destination country through the US Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](https://step.state.gov/step/) (<https://step.state.gov/step/>) [Ⓜ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>).

During Your Trip

General Travel Health Recommendations

Protect your health and safety during your trip by following CDC's recommended healthy behaviors. Learn more by going to the "Stay Healthy and Safe" section of the [Destination page](/travel/destinations/list) (</travel/destinations/list>) for the country where you are traveling and the [Humanitarian Aid Workers](/travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers) (</travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers>) page.

General Recommendations for Preventing Ebola

Ebola is spread through direct, unprotected contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected symptomatic person, contact with the body of someone who has died from Ebola, and exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected blood or other body fluids and tissues.

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Ebola, and many people who get the disease die. Therefore, it is important to take steps to prevent Ebola.


- Practice careful hygiene. Avoid contact with blood and body fluids.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Avoid direct contact with the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
- Avoid contact with animals or with raw or undercooked meat.
- Do not eat or handle bushmeat.
- Avoid hospitals in affected countries where Ebola patients are being treated.

Special Health Care Worker Recommendations for Preventing Ebola


If you will be working in health care settings, you should be prepared to care for patients in a region where resources are scarce and the health care system is strained. Refer to the "[Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Care of Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Filovirus Haemorrhagic Fever in Health Care Settings, with a Focus on Ebola](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/who-ipc-guidance-ebolafinal-09082014.pdf?ua=1)" (<http://www.who.int/csr/resources/who-ipc-guidance-ebolafinal-09082014.pdf?ua=1>) [Ⓜ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>), even if you do not plan to work directly with Ebola patients.

Although not a full list of precautions, humanitarian aid workers traveling to West Africa to work in a health care setting may be exposed to people with Ebola and should be sure to follow these steps:

- Wear the right personal protective equipment, including but not limited to masks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection, when entering patient care areas.

- Use proper infection prevention and control measures.
 - Follow cleaning and disinfection recommendations of reusable medical equipment, proper disposal of needles and other disposable equipment, and proper disposal of patient excretions.
 - Wash your hands often, using soap and water (or alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available) to remove potentially infectious materials from your skin and help prevent disease transmission.
 - Do not reuse gloves; instead dispose of them according to recommended infection control precautions. After disposing of the gloves, wash your hands.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of Ebola and develop a triage system so Ebola patients can be identified and properly handled.
- Avoid direct, unprotected contact with the bodies of people who have died from Ebola.
- Immediately notify your organization and the **US embassy or consulate** (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) in the country if you think you have been exposed to Ebola.

Recommendations If You Become Sick During Your Trip

- Notify your organization that you have become ill.
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever (temperature greater than 101.5°F or 38.6°C) and symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising. Tell the doctor about your symptoms prior to going to the doctor's office or hospital. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the doctor's office or hospital.
- The **US embassy or consulate** (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) is often able to provide advice on where you can get health care. (You are encouraged to identify these resources in advance.)
- Limit your contact with other people when you travel to the doctor; avoid public transportation.
- Do not travel anywhere except to the doctor's office or hospital.


After Your Return to the United States

If you were exposed to Ebola during your trip, call your doctor even if you do not have symptoms. Your doctor should evaluate your exposure level and symptoms if you have them and consult with public health authorities to determine whether actions, such as medical evaluation and testing for Ebola, monitoring, or travel restrictions are needed.

Pay attention to your health after you return, even if you were not exposed to Ebola during your trip.

- Monitor your health for 21 days if you were in an area with an Ebola outbreak.
 - Take your temperature every morning and evening.
 - Watch for other Ebola symptoms: severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.
 - If your temperature is above 101.5°F (38.6°C) and you have any other Ebola symptoms, seek medical care immediately.
 - Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the doctor's office or hospital. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the doctor's office or hospital.
 - Limit your contact with other people when you travel to the doctor; avoid public transportation.
 - Do not travel anywhere except to the doctor's office or hospital.
- During the time that you are monitoring your health, you can continue your normal activities, including work. If you get symptoms of Ebola, it is important to stay apart from other people and to call your doctor right away.

More Information

- See [CDC Travelers' Health – Destinations \(/travel/destinations/list\)](/travel/destinations/list) for destination-specific recommendations for safe and healthy travel.
- [Humanitarian Aid Workers \(/travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers\)](/travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers)
- [Ebola Information for Health Care Workers \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/index.html)
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Care of Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Filovirus Haemorrhagic Fever in Health Care Settings, with a Focus on Ebola \(http://www.who.int/csr/resources/who-ipc-guidance-ebolafinal-09082014.pdf?ua=1\)](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/who-ipc-guidance-ebolafinal-09082014.pdf?ua=1) 
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Care of Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Filovirus Haemorrhagic Fever in Health Care Settings, with a Focus on Ebola \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- [Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers: Infection Control Posters for the African Health Care Setting \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/ic-posters.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/ic-posters.html)

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