An Ebola Reference for Schools and Parents

Addressing Schools’ and Parents’ Concerns about Ebola
November 17, 2014

1. What is Ebola?
Ebola is a rare disease caused by a virus. Ebola was first discovered in Africa in 1976. Since then, outbreaks have sporadically occurred in Africa. Currently, there is an Ebola epidemic in the West African countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

2. How does Ebola spread?
Ebola spreads from person-to-person by direct contact with a patient’s body fluids, like sweat, saliva, mucus, blood, vomit, urine, feces, breast milk, and semen. Infected objects, like needles, can also spread it. Ebola can also spread after death, especially if handling an infected person’s corpse, linens, mattresses, and other infected objects. People can only spread the virus while they have a fever or other symptoms. The virus gets into the body through broken skin or mucous membranes. People who do not show any symptoms do not spread Ebola. Ebola does not spread through air, food, water, mosquitos, or other insects. Only mammals, like humans, bats, apes, or monkeys, have been infected with Ebola.

3. What are the symptoms of Ebola?
It takes 8 to 10 days for most people to show symptoms, but it can range from 2 to 21 days. Ebola can cause these signs of disease:
- Severe headache
- Fever (101.5°F or higher)
- Weakness or muscle pain
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach or muscle pain
- Lack of appetite
- Unexplained blood loss or bleeding
- Delirium (confusion)

4. How is Ebola treated?
There is no specific medication, treatment, or vaccine for Ebola. Instead, treatment focuses on keeping the person alive by giving fluids and managing the serious health problems that can happen.

5. Does Ebola pose a health risk to Monterey County?
Right now, there have only been four cases diagnosed in the United States (Texas and New York) and none in Monterey County. There have also been six individuals diagnosed in Africa who were brought to the United States for treatment. The risk of getting Ebola is very low unless a person has direct unprotected contact with an Ebola patient’s body fluids or handles bats, apes, or monkeys from outbreak areas. Using effective infection control practices, like wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), helps prevent the spread of illness.

Key Messages:
- The risk of getting sick with Ebola is very low in the U.S. and in Monterey County, unless a person has direct, unprotected contact with an Ebola patient’s body fluids or handles bats, apes, or monkeys from Ebola outbreak areas.
- The Monterey County Health Department is working with area hospitals, first responders, doctors, and other agencies to be prepared.

Who to contact for more information?
Monterey County Health Department
831-755-4521
www.mtyhd.org
Follow us on Twitter: @WashCoverStay
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola

Adapted from Information Provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.
Monterey County Health Department, Public Health Bureau, Communicable Disease Prevention & Control
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6. How can I keep from getting Ebola?
You can only get Ebola by having direct contact with the blood or body fluids from a symptomatic person. This typically happens while caring for a sick person. If you plan to travel to West Africa or an area where an Ebola outbreak is occurring:

- Do wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do NOT touch the blood or body fluids (like urine, feces, saliva, vomit, sweat, and semen) of sick people.
- 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.

7. How should I talk to children about Ebola?
Sometimes children may feel a sense of anxiety or nervousness based on what is being reported in the news. The following tips may help you talk to children about their feelings:

- Listen to your children. Reassure them that they are safe and try to focus on the facts.
- Allow them to ask questions. Help your children understand how the illness is spread.
- Embrace teachable moments. This may be a good time to talk to your child about how misunderstanding and misinformation can create fear.

8. What should schools do if they suspect there is someone ill with Ebola?
Call the Monterey County Health Department at 831-755-4521. Public health workers will assist schools in assessing the individual’s risk of having Ebola by asking questions about travel history and symptoms. They will also provide guidance on any next steps that should be taken. If the individual is critically ill (for example, having trouble breathing), call 9-1-1 and provide as much information as possible.

9. Will schools be alerted if an Ebola case is confirmed in Monterey County?
Yes. The Monterey County Health Department will notify schools and the public if an individual is confirmed to have Ebola in Monterey County. The Monterey County Health Department will also provide information about any risk to schools and the public at that time. The Health Department will guide schools and parents on any actions they may need to take.

10. What is the Health Department doing about Ebola?
Despite the low risk of an Ebola outbreak locally, we want to make sure you are aware of the facts and what proactive steps are being taken. The Monterey County Health Department is working closely with area hospitals, first responders, doctors, and other agencies to be prepared in the unlikely event we have a case of Ebola in Monterey County.

Where can schools and parents go for more information?
Monterey County Health Department Communicable Disease Unit
831-755-4521
www.mtyhd.org

Information on Ebola
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola

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