



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

August 2014

### **Who is at risk of Ebolavirus disease (EVD)?**

People who are living in or travelling to affected areas of Africa may be at risk of infection; however, the risk of infection is extremely low unless there has been direct exposure to the bodily fluids of an infected person, alive or dead. Such fluids include blood, vomit, faeces, sweat, semen or saliva.

Caring for and touching ill relatives is a known risk factor for infection, and healthcare workers, particularly those in resource poor settings with inadequate infection control are also at risk.

### **What should I do if I return from travel in affected countries and feel unwell?**

If you return from travel to affected areas of Africa and feel unwell you should see your doctor or go to the emergency department to work out why you are ill. You should advise that you have been in Africa, particularly if you have been in contact with someone infected with EVD.

### **How is it prevented?**

People travelling in affected countries should avoid direct exposure to the bodily fluids of an infected person or animal, alive or dead. Such fluids include blood, vomit, faeces, sweat, semen or saliva. People should also practice careful hygiene, including regular hand washing.

### **What is happening at the Australian Border?**

Australia has one of the world's best border protection systems. As part of routine procedures, incoming flights to Australia have on-board announcements, asking passengers who are feeling unwell with fever, chills or sweats to alert a crew member.

Border protection staff also provide information and advice to passengers at the border who are unsure of what they should do if they are feeling ill.

The Australian Government will continue to closely monitor the situation overseas and will continue assess the efficacy of our border measures.

**Why isn't Australia using thermal scanners at our international airports?**

Australia does not plan to install thermal scanners at our airports as evidence from the 2009 influenza pandemic demonstrated their lack of effectiveness.

**Is there a vaccine for EVD?**

No. There is no vaccine to prevent EVD.

**What is EVD?**

EVD is a serious infection caused by a virus. It is an uncommon disease; outbreaks have only occurred in Africa. EVD was previously called Ebola haemorrhagic fever.

**Where is the current outbreak of EVD occurring?**

Cases of EVD have recently been confirmed in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. There are also suspected cases in Nigeria. Currently, all cases of EVD have been associated with travel to affected areas in West Africa.

**Have there been any cases in Australia?**

There has never been a case of EVD in Australia.

**What are the symptoms?**

Ebolavirus can cause a serious illness, with a sudden onset of fever, muscle aches, weakness, headache and abdominal pain.

This is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash and in some cases bleeding.

**How is it spread?**

EVD is not transmitted through the air or coughing.

EVD is transmitted via contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of an infected person or animal, alive or dead. Such fluids include blood, vomit, faeces, sweat, semen or saliva. It may also be transmitted via contact with environments contaminated with such fluid, including in healthcare settings.

Individuals who are not symptomatic are not contagious. In order for the virus to be transmitted, an individual would have to have direct contact with an individual who is experiencing symptoms.

**Where can I get more information about EVD?**

Further information about EVD is available on the Department of Health's website

[www.health.gov.au/ebola](http://www.health.gov.au/ebola)

**How do I contact public health authorities in my state/territory?**

Australian Capital Territory - 02 6205 2155.

New South Wales - 1300 066 055

Northern Territory - 08 8922 8888

Queensland – 13 432584

South Australia - 1300 232 272

Tasmania - 1800 671 738

Victoria - 1300 606 024

Western Australia – 08 9388 4999