Ebola: What You Need to Know

Key Points:
- Ebola is not spread to others until a person has symptoms.
- Only people who have direct contact with blood and body fluids of someone with Ebola are at risk of becoming infected.
- Infection prevention measures used every day by US health care facilities are effective to prevent the spread of Ebola.
- Arlington County Public Health Division (ACPHD) and the Virginia Department of Health have a coordinated public health and health care response system to control and prevent the spread of diseases like Ebola.

What is Ebola?
Ebola is a rare disease which is causing outbreaks in West Africa. The hardest hit nations are Guinea and Sierra Leone.

What are Ebola symptoms?
Symptoms develop 2-21 days after exposure to Ebola. They include:
- Fever
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite
- Muscle aches
- Abnormal bleeding

How do you get Ebola?
People can get Ebola through DIRECT contact with a sick person’s bodily fluid, including blood, sweat, breast milk, semen, feces, or saliva. A patient MUST have Ebola symptoms to spread the disease to other people. People cannot spread Ebola if they do not have symptoms. Ebola CANNOT be spread through breathing.

What if I have been to West Africa recently?
Travelers who have recently visited outbreak-affected areas (Guinea and Sierra Leone) should monitor themselves for Ebola symptoms for 21 days. Check twice daily for a fever above 100.4°F. Call a doctor if you show signs of illness. People who do not show signs of illness after 21 days will not become sick with Ebola.

How do I prevent Ebola?
Ebola poses low risk to the US public. To further decrease risk, you can:
- Avoid travel to areas affected by Ebola.
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid contact with other people’s bodily fluids.
- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if warm water and soap are unavailable.

What is ACPHD doing to prevent Ebola in the community?
ACPHD staff continue to update hospital and health care communities with recommendations to help identify and respond appropriately to possible Ebola cases. ACPHD staff will assist in identifying and monitoring close contacts of people with Ebola to identify new Ebola cases requiring isolation. ACPHD will also arrange for appropriate testing for Ebola. Staff are on-call 24/7 to provide this support.

Where can I learn more about Ebola?
Visit the US Centers for Disease Control website: http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/