



**Population and Public Health**  
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## **Public Health Alert # 1**

**Date:** August 26, 2014  
**To:** Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, ER staff, Lab staff and ICU staff  
**From:** Saskatoon Health Region, Deputy Medical Health Officer (MHO)  
**RE:** **Evaluating Patients for Ebola Virus Disease in Saskatoon Health Region**

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Dear Colleague:

### **Summary of Alert:**

- o No cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) have been identified and diagnosed so far in Canada.
- o Report immediately to MHO (306-655-4612) if seeing any patient with fever who traveled to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Lagos, Nigeria within 21 days of symptom onset.
  - o Isolate patient being evaluated for possible EVD in a single room with a private bathroom, and use contact and droplet precautions.
  - o Seek an immediate infectious disease (ID) specialist consult. Call (306-655-1000) and ask to speak to ID doctor on-call.
  - o Ask about contact to a suspected or known EVD case; work in a laboratory or healthcare setting, physical contact with a deceased person, or attendance at a funeral when in an outbreak area.
  - o ID will determine if diagnostic testing for EVD is indicated.
  - o Any diagnostic testing for a person under investigation for EVD must only be performed at the designated hospital location in SHR and specimens will be shipped for testing to the National Microbiology Lab.
  - o Contact EMS for transfer of patient and notify that patient is a suspect EVD case.
  - o Maintain a log of all persons who have direct contact with suspect case. (patients and accompanying individuals)
  - o Closure of facility is not indicated while case is there. (See Viral Hemorrhagic Fever Risk Assessment Algorithm and review and post for all staff)

Although the risk to most travelers is considered low, health care professionals are advised to be on the lookout for illnesses compatible with Ebola virus disease in travelers returning from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone within 21 days of symptom onset.

Please find attached a 2 page document to assist in:

- Determining if a patient with symptoms and travel / other exposure history is at risk of having Ebola / Viral Hemorrhagic Fever
- Protocol to initiate to ensure further patient transfer, management and testing is done in a way to minimize further exposure to others.

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**If diagnosis is suspected, clinicians should implement patient isolation and droplet and contact infection control precautions, and then consult with the infectious disease specialist on-call, and immediately notify the regional Medical Health Officer by phone.** This will facilitate a risk assessment and a coordinated plan for transfer to an appropriate health care facility in either Regina or Saskatoon and for submission of laboratory samples. Other more common travel-related febrile illnesses such as malaria or typhoid will need to be considered in the differential diagnosis.

The outbreak in Western Africa is on-going. Cases have been reported among aid workers and in a person, who travelled by airplane from Liberia to Nigeria after attending a traditional funeral of a relative who died of Ebola virus disease. Health care workers have been evacuated out of the epidemic countries to the United States and recently to the United Kingdom. The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued a travel notice advising Canadians to avoid all non-essential travel to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (see <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>).

Ebola virus disease is a severe disease that causes hemorrhagic fever in humans and animals. Diseases that cause hemorrhagic fevers, such as Ebola, are often fatal as they affect the body's vascular system and can lead to significant internal bleeding and organ failure. Symptoms consist of a sudden onset of fever, malaise, myalgia, headache, conjunctival injection, pharyngitis, vomiting, and diarrhea.

The Ebola virus can spread through contact with:

- infected animals
- blood, body fluids or tissues of infected persons
- medical equipment (such as needles) that are contaminated with infected body fluids

As long as precautions are taken, there is low risk of contracting disease in a country where the Ebola virus is present. The incubation period is 2 to 21 days. People become contagious once they begin to show symptoms; they are not contagious during the incubation period.

For additional information on Ebola virus disease and the situation in Western Africa, please see the World Health Organization web site at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>

For information on infection control precautions, please see PHAC's *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings* available at: [http://www.ipac-canada.org/pdf/2013\\_PHAC\\_RPAP-EN.pdf](http://www.ipac-canada.org/pdf/2013_PHAC_RPAP-EN.pdf)

Sincerely,

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Deputy Medical Health Officer  
Saskatoon Health Region

**NOTE:** Recommendations are likely to change as new information about Ebola becomes available. Check the SHR website or Ministry of Health for updated guidance.