

EBOLA VIRUS: SUMMARY OF THE DISEASE

Disease name

Ebola hemorrhagic fever (Ebola HF)

Description

Ebola is a severe often fatal disease that affects people as well as monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees (apes).

Origins of the disease

- Ebola first appeared in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks, one in a village near the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the other in a remote area of Sudan.
- The origin of the virus is unknown but fruit bats (Pteropodidae) are considered the likely host of the Ebola virus, based on available evidence.

How it Spreads

- Close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals; possibly eating contaminated meals.
- Human to human: Direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, or other bodily fluids or secretions (stool, urine, saliva, semen) of infected people.
- Contact with contaminated objects such as needles, soiled clothing, or bed linen.

Symptoms

- Sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat,
- Vomiting, diarrhea, impaired kidney and liver functions,
- Rash, internal and external bleeding.
- Around Day 5, most patients develop a maculopapular rash that is prominent on the trunk followed by desquamation in survivors.
- Central nervous system involvement is often manifested by somnolence, delirium, or coma. Wasting becomes evident later, and bleeding manifestations, such as petechiae and hemorrhages, occur in half or more of the patients.
- During the second week, the patient defervesces and improves markedly or dies in shock with multiorgan dysfunction, often accompanied by disseminated intravascular coagulation, anuria, and liver failure.
- Convalescence may be protracted and accompanied by arthralgia, orchitis, recurrent hepatitis, transverse myelitis, psychosocial disturbances, or uveitis.

Treatment

No standard treatment just intensive supportive care: sick people isolated, intravenous fluids or oral rehydration with solutions that contain electrolytes, oxygen and treatment of secondary infections.