

TRAVEL ADVISORY TO PREVENT THE IMPORTATION OF EBOLA INTO SOUTH AFRICA

The purpose of this advisory is to notify travellers about the Ebola disease outbreak and inform them about preventative measures they can take and what Government is doing.

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with the Ebola virus. It is only spread by direct contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids, contaminated objects or infected animals in affected countries.

Ebola is not spread through the air or water.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, sore throat, and weakness, followed by diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain. Skin rash, red eyes, and internal and external bleeding may be seen in some patients.

Who is at risk?

People could become infected if they come into contact with blood or body fluids from someone who is infected or has died from Ebola.

Health care providers caring for Ebola patients, family and friends in close contact with an ill person are at highest risk because they may come into direct contact with blood or body fluids.

What is the Department of Health doing about it?

To date, there are no Ebola cases in South Africa. However, as part of enhanced precautionary measures to prevent occurrence or spread of Ebola into the country, the Department of Health is issuing a travel advisory. This advisory applies to all travellers coming to or leaving South Africa to or from affected countries.

Countries have been divided into three categories, viz:

- High risk countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone);
- Medium risk countries (Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia). Please note that some of these countries like Kenya and Ethiopia have no Ebola yet, but are mentioned here because most people travelling from West Africa to South Africa travel via these countries;
- Low risk countries (all other countries excluding the above).

For the first category countries, that are the high risk countries, there are four types of travelers likely to enter South Africa i.e.:

- South Africans based in the affected countries;
- People with permanent residence status who may come from affected countries;
- South Africans who may be traveling to affected countries to conduct business; and
- Citizens of the affected countries who want to travel to South Africa.

For all these travellers the following measures shall apply:

1. All South Africans and residents are hereby advised to avoid non-essential travel to Liberia, Guinea or Sierra Leone. All returning travellers from these countries will be subjected to rigorous screening and medical assessments before being allowed entry into the country.
2. Essential travel may include Diplomatic or official health and humanitarian missions and business travel.

3. Non-South Africans travelling from high risk countries will **not** be allowed entry unless the travel is considered absolutely essential.

The following additional measures will be instituted:

1. **All** travellers and crew members arriving into South African Points of Entry must have completed a Travel Health questionnaire upon arrival. If found to have any of the symptoms or signs suggestive of Ebola, they will be referred to one of the designated hospitals for further investigations and management.
2. Travellers from or through Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone, within the last month of arrival into South Africa, must undergo additional screening at the Points of Entry.
 - 2.1 For those who display symptoms related to Ebola: Travellers will be escorted to the clinic at the Point of Entry for further examination. Where there is no clinic at the Point of Entry, travellers will be kept apart in an identified area where there is no direct contact with other people until such time as the emergency services arrive for further examination or transport of the traveller.
 - 2.2 For those with no symptoms: Travellers will be provided with health information on Ebola and will be required to report body temperatures daily to the Department of Health. They will also be required to report details of any symptoms such as fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash or red eyes.
3. Travellers from other countries:
 - 3.1 Those that show symptoms will be subjected to the same process as in paragraph 2.1.
 - 3.2 Those that do not show symptoms will be cleared to follow the normal immigration procedures.
4. If any of the travellers referred to the Point of Entry clinic are found to fit the case definition for EVD, the necessary infection control measures should be implemented while awaiting transportation of the traveller to the designated health facility.
5. Those without symptoms or signs will be provided with information on Ebola and followed up for 21 days. Information will also be provided on phone numbers to call in case of development of fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash or red eyes.

What can travellers do to prevent Ebola?

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Ebola, and many people who get the disease die. Therefore, it is important to take steps to prevent Ebola. Avoid non-essential travel to Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. If you must travel to these countries, please make sure to do the following:

- Avoid restricted areas in affected countries.
- Practice careful hygiene. Avoid contact with blood and body fluids of sick persons.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
- Avoid contact with wild animals or with bush meat in affected countries.
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
- The South African Embassy or consulate is often able to provide advice on facilities that are suitable for your needs.
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes.
- Limit your contact with other people when you travel to the doctor. Do not travel anywhere else.

Pay attention to your health after you return to South Africa, by doing the following:

- Inform the Port Health official of your occupation and travel history on arrival in South Africa.
- Monitor your health for 21 days if you were in an area with an Ebola outbreak, especially if you were in contact with blood or body fluids, items that have come in contact with blood or body fluids, wild animals or bush meat, or hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
- Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes. Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the examination/emergency room or surgery. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the room.

Special recommendation for Health Care Workers

Health care workers who may be exposed to people with the disease should follow these steps:

- Wear protective clothing, including masks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection.
- Practice proper infection control and sterilisation measures. For more information, see "Infection Control for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers in the African Health Care Setting."
<http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/whoemcesr982sec1-4.pdf>
- Isolate Ebola patients from unprotected people.
- Avoid direct contact with the bodies of people who have died from Ebola.
- Notify health officials if you have been exposed to someone with Ebola.
- Inform the Port Health official of your occupation and travel history on arrival in South Africa.