

Ebola: advice and risk assessment for educational, childcare and young persons' settings

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease occurring in West Africa. It was first reported in March 2014 in Guinea and since late May has involved four countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. (So far all the cases in Nigeria have been linked to transmission from a single imported case; there is no evidence of wider transmission in that country).

Ebola is a rare but serious viral infection. However, people in the UK are not at risk of Ebola, as the virus is only transmitted by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. **There have been no cases of Ebola Virus Disease being contracted in the UK** and the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is **very low**.

A British national who has been diagnosed with Ebola was repatriated from Sierra Leone in August 2014 under highly controlled conditions for treatment in the UK. It remains unlikely but not impossible that persons infected in Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK. The affected countries have introduced exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights. This is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidance and is one of many measures to reduce the risk of international spread of disease. However, as the time between contact with an infected person and symptoms first appearing can range from 2 – 21 days, it is possible that children and students returning from affected countries could develop symptoms up to three weeks after arrival.

In summary:

- the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is very low
- there have been several previous outbreaks of Ebola in other parts of Africa, but none have led to cases being contracted in Europe
- transmission of Ebola from person to person is by direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an ill person with the disease. The virus is **not** spread by the airborne route
- the time between contact with the infected person and the time that first symptoms appear (incubation period) of Ebola ranges from two to 21 days
- any persons arriving back in the UK having travelled from any of the affected countries, and who are free of symptoms, are **not infectious** and there should be **no restrictions** on their school attendance or normal activities

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The attached algorithm has been developed specifically to assist educational, childcare and young persons' settings who may have children/students returning or visiting from affected countries.

All staff or those with contact with children should already be aware of what to do if a child/student falls ill and there is general guidance (referenced below) on infection control in school and childcare settings.

Further information about the Ebola outbreak can be obtained from your local health protection team, and on the following websites:

Public Health England (including the outbreak and maps of affected area): http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Ebola/

WHO:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/index.html

Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Childcare Settings http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1203496946639

Foreign travel advice

https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Ebola: environmental cleaning guidance for potential contamination (excluding healthcare settings)

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-environmental-cleaning-guidance-for-potential-contamination-excluding-healthcare-settings

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Ebola risk assessment in educational, childcare and young persons' settings

This algorithm is to inform the assessment of unwell children in educational, childcare and young persons' settings, and will assist the public health response and ensure the appropriate organisations are informed. If the child is unable to answer questions, please seek information from the responsible adult.

Does the child/student appear unwell? Symptoms to look out for include fever (eg pale skin, sweating or shivering), diarrhoea and vomiting, and weakness (eg unable to stand unsupported as appropriate for age)



If **no**, continue as normal



If yes, ask these questions

Has the child/student arrived from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone or have they spent any time in these countries within the past 21 days?



If **no**, follow usual guidance for dealing with an unwell child



Immediate medical assessment is needed. Refer the child/student to the local NHS as per normal procedures including contacting parents.

When referring them to the local ambulance service/initial responders, specify it is for a child/student who has recently returned from a country involved in the current Ebola outbreak and they are suspected to have Ebola. This ensures healthcare professionals use the appropriate personal protective equipment.

While waiting for the ambulance service/initial responders to arrive, the unwell person should be separated from other children/students in a separate room.

Contact your local PHE Centre, which will assist with any subsequent public health action required, for example following up contacts of the child. Thorough cleaning and decontamination is advised and this should be discussed with the PHE Centre. Read here for guidance on how to deal with any items that are contaminated. Search for your local PHE Centre contact details at: www.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/PostcodeSearch

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