

# Ebola in Sierra Leone

Updated: July 31, 2014

[CDC urges all US residents to avoid nonessential travel to Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia because of an unprecedented outbreak of Ebola.](#)

## What is the current situation?

An outbreak of Ebola has been ongoing in Sierra Leone since May 2014. This outbreak also affects Liberia and Guinea; to date more than 1320 cases have occurred in the three countries and more than 725 people have died, making this the largest outbreak of Ebola in history. At least three Americans have been infected; two are health care workers in an Ebola clinic. Affected districts in Sierra Leone include Bo, Bombali, Bonthe, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko, Tonkolili, and Western Area, including the capital of Freetown. Instances of civil unrest and violence against aid workers have been reported in West Africa as a result of the outbreak. The public health infrastructure in Sierra Leone is being severely strained as the outbreak grows.

Sierra Leone's government has recently instituted enhanced measures to combat the spread of Ebola, many of which will likely make travel to, from, and within the country difficult. The government has taken the following steps:

- Instituted new protocols for arriving and departing passengers at Lungi International Airport.
- Instituted restrictions on public and other mass gatherings.
- Instituted quarantine measures for communities affected by Ebola; travel in and out of those communities will be restricted until a medical team clears them.
- Authorized house-to-house searches to locate and quarantine Ebola patients and requires all deaths be reported before burial.
- Authorized police and military personnel to aid in enforcing these and other prevention and control measures.
- Requires local government officials to establish by-laws to support Ebola prevention efforts.

**CDC recommends that US residents avoid nonessential travel to Sierra Leone.** If you must travel, such as for humanitarian aid work in response to the outbreak, protect yourself by following CDC's advice for avoiding contact with the blood and body fluids of people who are ill with Ebola. For more information, visit [Outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone](#) on the [CDC Ebola website](#).

This recommendation to avoid nonessential travel is intended to facilitate control of the outbreak and prevent continued spread in two ways: to protect US residents who may be planning travel to the affected areas and to enable the government of Sierra Leone to respond most effectively to contain this outbreak. CDC remains committed to the multinational effort to assist Sierra Leone in controlling the outbreak and is scaling up its response activities by, among other things, deploying additional staff to the affected countries. International humanitarian assistance must continue, and CDC encourages airlines to continue flights to and from the region to facilitate transport of teams and supplies essential to control the outbreak.

## **What is Ebola?**

Ebola virus disease (also known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever) is a rare and deadly disease. The disease is native to several African countries and is caused by infection with one of the ebolaviruses (Ebola, Sudan, Bundibugyo, or Taï Forest virus). It is spread by direct contact with a sick person's blood or body fluids. It is also spread by contact with contaminated objects or infected animals.

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

## **Who is at risk?**

Travelers could be infected if they come into contact with blood or body fluids from someone who is sick or has died from Ebola, sick wildlife, or meat from an infected animal. Health care providers caring for Ebola patients and family and friends in close contact with an ill person are at highest risk because they may come into contact with blood or body fluids.

## **What can travelers 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 nonessential travel to Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.
- If you must travel, please make sure to do the following:
  - Practice careful hygiene. Avoid contact with blood and body fluids.
  - 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 animals or with raw meat.
  - Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. The US Embassy or consulate is often able to provide advice on facilities that are suitable for your needs. The US Embassy in Freetown can be reached at +(232) 76-515-000.
  - Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhea, 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.
    - Monitor your health for 10 days if you were in an area with an Ebola outbreak but were not in contact with blood or body fluids, items that have come in contact with blood or body fluids, animals or raw meat, or hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated.
    - Monitor your health for 21 days if you think you might have been exposed to Ebola.
    - Seek medical care immediately if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes.

- Tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms before you go to the office or emergency room. Advance notice will help the doctor care for you and protect other people who may be in the office.

## **Special Recommendations 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 sterilization measures. For more information, see “[Infection Control for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers in the African Health Care Setting.](#)”
- 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.

## **Traveler Information**

- [CDC Ebola factsheet](#)
- [CDC Ebola website](#)
- [People Working and Living Abroad](#)
- [US Embassy Security Message: Update on Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever](#)
- [Health Information for Travelers to Sierra Leone](#)

## **Clinician Information**

- [CDC Ebola website](#)
- [Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers](#) in *CDC Health Information for International Travelers 2014*—“Yellow Book”
- [Health Information for Travelers to Sierra Leone](#)

## **Information for Airline Personnel**

- [Interim Guidance about Ebola Virus Infection for Airline Flight Crews, Cleaning and Cargo Personnel](#)