

# Ebola Virus Disease



## Causative agent

The Ebola virus disease (EVD; formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever) is caused by infection with Ebola virus which belongs to the family called Filoviridae.

Ebola first appeared in 1976 in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the latter in a village situated near the Ebola River, from which the disease took its name.

## Clinical features

EVD is a severe acute viral illness. The incubation period ranges from 2 to 21 days. Patients may have sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding. The disease has a high mortality rate of up to 90%.

## Mode of transmission

Ebola virus is introduced into the human population through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals. Some fruit bats are considered to be the natural host of the Ebola virus.

It then spreads in the community through human-to-human transmission, with infection resulting from direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and indirect contact with environments contaminated with such fluids.

People are infectious as long as their blood and secretions contain the virus.

## Treatment

There is no specific treatment for the disease.

Patients must be managed in isolation facilities to prevent the spread of the infection. Severely ill patients require intensive supportive care.

## Prevention

There is no licensed vaccine available for EVD. To prevent the disease, it is important for the travellers to observe the following:

- Avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas
- Observe good personal and environmental hygiene; always remember to use liquid soap or alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid close contact with feverish or ill persons, and avoid contact with blood or bodily fluids of patients, including items which may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or bodily fluids
- Avoid contact with animals
- Cook food thoroughly before consumption; and
- Upon returning from affected area, observe closely the health conditions for 21 days. If you develop symptoms of EVD, you should call 999 and inform the staff about your condition to arrange consultation in Accident and Emergency Department

Centre for Health Protection Website

[www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk)

24-Hour Health Education Hotline of the Department of Health

**2833 0111**