



Steps to Control Ebola

1) The first 24 hours: Identify the outbreak

Ebola can hide in a person's body from two days to three weeks before symptoms emerge. Individuals don't transmit Ebola during that incubation time — they're only contagious once they show symptoms.

EARLY SYMPTOMS COULD BE CONFUSED WITH THE FLU OR DIARRHEA

Once an initial Ebola patient starts feeling sick, the person will probably seem at first like he or she has the flu or traveler's diarrhea. (Some of the more famous symptoms of Ebola, like bleeding from orifices, don't tend to come on until later and only occur in about half of the cases.)

Although the patient would now be contagious, that doesn't mean that it's exceptionally easy to catch. Ebola doesn't spread through the air, and it's harder to catch than things like the flu. You can't get it just from being on the same plane or in the same public space. The only way to get Ebola is to touch a patient's bodily fluids, like vomit, diarrhea, sweat, saliva, or blood.

Screening is important to determine: (1) Has the person traveled to a country that has Ebola in the last 21 days **AND** (2) Does the person have the following symptoms: headache, weakness, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or bleeding/bruising? Consideration should also be given to whether or not the patient been exposed to a patient with a confirmed diagnosis of Ebola.

If people realize that this might be Ebola early on, they should be able to avoid getting infected by keeping away from the patient's bodily fluids. But if that doesn't cross their minds for a while, people will be more likely to get the virus by accident. In that first day of symptoms, every hour counts.

2) The next step: Isolate the patient

In US hospitals, any suspected case of Ebola would be treated as a potential risk until tests come back negative. This means that standard procedures to protect other patients and health-care workers from the patient's bodily fluids would be put into place.

Because Ebola doesn't spread through the air, hospital workers wouldn't have to wear respirators or what you might think of as full *Outbreak* gear. However, they would protect their body and face from fluids that might splash on them, using things like gowns or full body suits, masks, gloves, and goggles.

Anything that touches the patient would be sterilized or disposed of in a safe manner. And if the patient dies, the body would be carefully handled so that it won't be a danger to anyone, either.

3) Track down other potential patients

Detective work is a major part of controlling a disease like Ebola. Experts would interview the patient, his/her relatives, and other potential close contacts to monitor them and make sure that they don't spread the disease to others.

Officials will then suggest various options for these people, depending on the level of risk, including watching and waiting, isolation at home, and testing for infection.

4) Keep patients in the hospital until they are not a threat

It's important to remember that about 40 percent of the patients in this Ebola outbreak have survived. There's no specific pill or shot that will make an Ebola infection go away, but doctors can try to make the patient comfortable, give IV fluids, and treat symptoms.

To prevent Ebola from spreading, health authorities wouldn't release a patient from the hospital until it's clear that the person won't be a danger to others.