

Ebola virus disease

Ebola haemorrhagic fever is a viral disease that occurs in Africa. The largest outbreak of the disease occurred between 2013 and 2016 in three West African countries (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), with more than 28,000 cases and 11,000 deaths.

This disease does not occur naturally in Europe, but can be introduced to the continent by travellers who become infected while visiting or staying in African countries and then fall ill after arriving in Europe. The last imported case of the disease in Europe was in 2015. Since then, no new confirmed cases have been reported in the EU/EEA.

The cause

Ebola virus disease, known as viral haemorrhagic fever, is caused by infection with the Ebola virus, which belongs to the *Filoviridae* family.

Reservoir

The natural reservoir of the virus are certain species of bats from the *Pteropodidae* family in Central and West Africa. The Ebola virus has also been detected in chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, and forest antelopes.

Transmission

The Ebola virus is transmitted between humans through contact with blood (through broken skin or mucous membranes), bodily fluids and secretions (e.g. saliva, urine and vomit) from an infected person, and through direct contact with objects contaminated with these fluids or secretions. Humans can become infected through contact with dead or sick wild animals (such as chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelopes and bats), including through consuming their meat, and through visiting caves and or mines where bats live.

Susceptibility to infection

The people at the highest risk of infection are healthcare workers who care for and treat patients, family members who live with patients, and people who come into contact with infected animals or consume their meat.

Incubation period

The incubation period, or the time from infection to the onset of the disease, lasts an average of 8 to 10 days with a range of 2 to 21 days.

Symptoms and signs

Ebola is an acute viral disease with a high mortality rate. It is characterized by a high body temperature, fatigue, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, headaches and muscle pain, as well as other non-specific symptoms. Some patients may also experience profuse internal and external bleeding, as well as multiple organ failure.

Mortality rate

The average mortality rate for Ebola is around 50%. Previous outbreaks have seen mortality rates ranging from 25% to 90%.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis is confirmed by a laboratory blood test, which detects the presence of the virus or antibodies. In Slovenia, diagnostic testing is carried out by the Institute of Microbiology and Immunology. Further information can be found on [their website](#).

Differential diagnosis

Other diseases, such as malaria, typhus, meningitis and viral haemorrhagic fevers, exhibit a similar clinical picture.

Infectiousness

A person is infectious when they have symptoms and as long as the virus is present in their blood and other bodily fluids. Their remains are infectious, too.

Treatment

The treatment for the disease is supportive, which means it supports the functioning of vital organ systems, and symptomatic, which means it relieves symptoms.

Infection prevention

The European Commission has approved two Ebola vaccines: Ervebo and Zabdeno/Mvabea, which are administered in two doses. In order to prevent infection, it is important to take measures to reduce the possibility of diseases transmission.

We recommend that you:

- Avoid contact with the blood and bodily fluids of infected people;
- Avoid contact with the semen of a person who has recovered from the disease for seven weeks after recovery;
- Not touch objects that may have come into contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person;

- Avoid contact with bats and other wild animals (such as chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys and forest antelopes) and do not consume their meat in areas where the disease is present.