



Ebola: Information for students in boarding schools and residential special schools whose families are based in Ebola-affected countries and who are returning home for holidays

This factsheet provides advice that boarding schools and residential special schools might find helpful, but which will need tailoring to make it more age-specific for the students within your school/classroom/house setting. It covers:

- advice on what to do and not do when back in the affected country
- screening both on exit from that country and on return to the UK
- the 21 day follow-up period within the UK, if the student is deemed to be 'at risk'

It aims to supplement current guidance for UK schools and universities available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-advice-and-risk-assessment-for-universities-and-further-educational-establishments> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-advice-and-risk-assessment-for-educational-childcare-and-young-persons-settings>.

Background: current outbreak

Since March 2014 there has been a large outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurring in West Africa – the largest outbreak ever reported. The most affected countries are currently Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Mali and other countries have had smaller numbers of cases.

How the outbreak is spreading

Ebola is spread from person to person through direct contact with the blood or body fluids (particularly vomit and faeces) of infected people showing symptoms of the disease. Those most at risk are people caring for an infected person, such as relatives, doctors or nurses. Mourners have also caught Ebola during the funeral of an infected person, through touching the body and other ritual practices.

A person with Ebola is not infectious unless they have symptoms. Once symptoms have developed, their infectiousness will increase as they get more unwell, when they may have vomiting and diarrhoea or bleeding.

Avoiding infection while in West African affected countries

The risk of a student being infected with Ebola during a visit back to family in any of the affected countries is low. However, the risk depends on the area in which the student's family lives, whether anyone is unwell at home, and the types of activities that they will be doing. There are some important things that they can do to minimise the risk.

Particularly important are actions to take if the student might be involved in visiting or looking after an unwell family member. Then they should follow basic measures to reduce the spread of infection:

- avoid any contact with blood and other body fluids including diarrhoea or vomit
- maintain good hand hygiene by washing hands regularly with soap and water, especially after visiting the toilet and before eating

In addition, they should:

- not touch the body of a deceased person or take part in other funeral rituals
- be aware that in some instances the person may have died from Ebola even if the cause of death is unknown, or is thought to be something other than Ebola

If in spite of the above advice, the student develops fever or other symptoms such as chills, muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, sore throat or rash while in an Ebola-affected country, they should visit a healthcare provider immediately.

Screening

The student should be aware that, even if completely well, it is likely they will be screened on exit from the country where their family lives (temperature taken and asked specific questions on contact, illness etc).

They will also be screened in transit airports and on arrival in the UK. This will involve completing a questionnaire and their temperature being taken.

If they are deemed to be 'at risk' on return to the UK, they will be followed up for 21 days by their local health protection team (see below).

Follow-up in the UK

Students 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 educational or normal activities.

If on re-entry screening into the UK the student is deemed to be 'at risk', they will be asked to take their temperature twice a day for 21 days.

It is important to remember that people infected with Ebola can only spread the virus to other people once they have developed symptoms. If they remain without symptoms they pose no infection risk to others. If they are still without symptoms at 21 days after their return they can cease to monitor their temperature as they are then past the incubation period for Ebola.

If a student has symptoms within the 21 day period, including a fever greater than or equal to 37.5°C, then urgent medical assessment is needed:

- discuss with NHS 111 in the first instance, specifying it is for a student who has recently returned from a country involved in the current Ebola outbreak and they are suspected to have Ebola
- NHS 111 will advise accordingly and arrange for an ambulance if necessary
- while waiting for the ambulance service/initial responders to arrive, the unwell person should be isolated from other students and staff in a separate room

Contact the local PHE centre, which will assist with any subsequent public health action required, for example contact tracing. You can find your local PHE centre's contact details online at:

<http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/PostcodeSearch/>

Thorough cleaning and decontamination may be advised and this should be discussed with the PHE centre.

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