



Ebola: Advice and Risk Assessment for Universities and Further Education Establishments

Since March 2014 there has been a large outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa, chiefly affecting three countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is the largest ever known outbreak of this disease, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in August 2014. Cases have also occurred in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain the UK and the US.

Ebola is a rare but serious viral infection. People in the UK are at low risk of Ebola, as the virus is only transmitted by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person, showing symptoms of the disease. There remains an expectation that a handful of further cases may occur in the UK in the coming months. Thus, although the risk of imported cases remains low, it is possible that further persons infected in Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK while incubating the disease (the incubation period is 2-21 days) and develop symptoms after their return.

The three most affected countries have introduced exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights. This is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidance and is one of many measures to reduce the risk of international spread of disease. However, as the time between contact with an infected person and symptoms first appearing can range from 2-21 days, it is possible that students returning from affected countries could develop symptoms up to three weeks after arrival.

In summary:

- the risk of Ebola in the UK remains **low**
- transmission of Ebola from person to person is by direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an ill person with the disease; the virus is not spread by the airborne route
- the time between contact with the infected person and the time that first symptoms appear (incubation period) of Ebola ranges from two to 21 days
- any persons 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 education or normal activities

The attached algorithm (see page 3) has been developed to assist universities and other further educational establishments who may have students returning or visiting from affected countries.

All staff who have contact with students should be aware of what to do if a student falls ill. There is [guidance available](#) on infection control in non-hospital settings.

Responsibility for any additional assessment of medical students, nursing students and other healthcare students deployed to hospitals and other health care facilities will lie with the occupational health services in those settings.

There is little evidence that the provision of protective equipment is effective in general settings, including within the university and college context.

Further information about the Ebola outbreak can be obtained from your local health protection team and on the following websites:

To find your local health protection team, use the post code look-up at:-

[http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/Postcode Search/](http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/PostcodeSearch/)

Public Health England (including the outbreak and maps of affected area):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinical-management-and-guidance>

WHO: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/index.html>

Ebola: environmental cleaning guidance for potential contamination (excluding healthcare settings)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-environmental-cleaning-guidance-for-potential-contamination-excluding-healthcare-settings>

Foreign travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

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Ebola risk assessment in further educational establishments

This algorithm is to inform the assessment of unwell students in further educational establishments, and will assist the public health response and ensure the appropriate organisations are informed. If the student is unable to answer questions, please seek information from an appropriate adult.

