

Ebola virus disease – information to travellers

Recommendations from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, based on recommendations by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Liberia was officially declared free of Ebola on 9 May 2015 by the World Health Organization (WHO), but several new cases have subsequently been reported in Liberia. Please check the latest advice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before travelling: <http://www.landsider.no>

Travel advice related to the ongoing Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2015

Travel advice is based on an overall assessment of various factors. Risk of infection is one factor behind the travel advice for the countries that are hardest hit in West Africa. Other factors that have been considered include overloaded local health care services and civil infrastructure, closed national borders and lack of transportation options in and out of the affected countries. This means that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may be unable to assist Norwegian citizens in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

What is Ebola virus disease?

Ebola is a severe disease, often fatal, caused by the Ebola virus. It is transmitted through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids (e.g. saliva, urine) from sick or deceased patients and wild animals. Between 2-21 days after exposure to the virus, the disease may suddenly begin with fever, muscle aches, fatigue, headache and sore throat. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash and malfunction of the liver and kidneys. Some patients also have profuse internal and external bleeding and multi-organ failure. There is no specific vaccine or treatment for the disease at this time.

Risk of infection with Ebola virus and how to avoid it

Even if you are living in, or have travelled to, affected areas, the risk of infection with Ebola virus is extremely low. To get infected, you need to have been directly exposed to bodily fluids of a dead or living infected person or animal. Contact with bodily fluids includes unprotected sexual contact with patients up to three months after they have recovered.

Casual contact in public places with people that do not appear to be sick does not transmit Ebola. You cannot contract Ebola virus by handling money or groceries. Mosquitoes do not transmit the disease. Ebola virus does not transmit through the air as influenza does. The risk of transmission before the onset of the first symptoms is low.

Advice to people travelling to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone from Norway

Even if you are living in, or have travelled to, affected areas, the risk of infection with Ebola virus is extremely low, unless you have been directly exposed to bodily fluids of a dead or living infected person or animal. If you **must** travel to the affected areas, the following preventive measures should minimize the risk of getting infected:

- Avoid direct contact with blood or bodily fluids of a patient or a corpse and with objects possibly contaminated.
- Avoid contact with wild animals, alive or dead, and consumption of 'bush meat'.
- Avoid having unprotected sexual intercourse.
- Avoid habitats which might be populated by bats, such as caves, isolated shelters, or mining sites.
- Wash hands regularly, using soap or antiseptics.

It is also prudent that you ensure that, in the event of any illness or accident, medical evacuation is covered by your travel insurance.

In addition, you should consult the advice provided locally by national authorities on travel to the affected countries.

Advice to people travelling from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to Norway

For most people, the risk of infection with the Ebola virus is extremely low.

However:

If you develop fever, unexplained fatigue, diarrhoea or any other severe symptoms (e.g. vomiting, unexplained bleeding, severe headache) in first three weeks after returning from Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone, you should:

- **Rapidly seek medical attention by phone and tell about your travel history**, since your symptoms may be due to Ebola or another infection (like malaria) that requires immediate investigation and treatment.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have been directly exposed to any bodily fluids from a dead or living infected person or animal, including unprotected sexual contact with patients that have recovered from Ebola, in order to enable medical personnel to use appropriate protection at the time of admission.

Please be aware that the World Health Organization has recommended that travellers leaving the affected areas should be screened for unexplained illness or symptoms that are linked to Ebola infection (such as fever). Travellers that have symptoms at the time of screening, regardless of the cause, may not be able to leave the affected area.