

Often mistaken for the flu or similar ailments, early symptoms of Ebola include:

- Fever greater than 101.5 °F
- Severe headaches
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising
- Loss of appetite

As the disease progresses, these symptoms can become more acute and may be accompanied by:

- Bloody diarrhea
- Internal and/or external bleeding
- Skin rashes
- Purple spots on the skin
- Impaired kidney or liver function

The death rate for infected individuals ranges from 50 to 90 percent, depending on the strain of the virus. The WHO estimates the mortality rate of the 2014 virus to be around 70 percent.

TREATMENT

Once a person has developed symptoms of Ebola, the virus typically remains in his or her system for six to 16 days.

There is no known cure for Ebola at this time, though two possible vaccines were undergoing evaluation as of October 2014. However, recovery from Ebola is possible, and steps can be taken by health care workers to increase the likelihood of survival.

Recovery from Ebola depends on good, supportive clinical care and the patient's immune response. According to the CDC, the following basic interventions, when used early, can significantly improve the chances of survival:

- Providing IV fluids and balancing electrolytes
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
- Treating other infections if they occur

Though the most dangerous period of Ebola is in the days and weeks following the onset of symptoms, full recovery can take months to complete.

People who recover from an Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years. Plasma from Ebola survivors is currently being explored as a possible treatment option.

PREVENTION

The people most at risk for contracting Ebola are individuals who have been in areas with ongoing Ebola outbreaks, health care workers who have treated patients with Ebola and individuals who have been in close contact with an Ebola sufferer.

If you travel to or are in an area affected by an Ebola outbreak, the CDC recommends you do the following:

- Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoid contact with blood and body fluids.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids (such as clothes, bedding, needles and medical equipment).
- Avoid direct contact with the bodies of people who have died from Ebola.
- Avoid contact with blood, fluids and raw meat prepared from carrier animals.
- After you return, monitor your health for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola.