



# Arkansas Department of Health

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**Governor Mike Beebe**

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## **UPDATE REGARDING EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE GUIDELINES**

The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is updating previously released Ebola virus disease (EVD) guidelines as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa continues to be a dynamic worldwide issue. It is important to understand that there have been no cases in Arkansas and Ebola still poses an extremely low risk here in the United States.

As of August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that there are approximately 3,069 EVD cases with 1,552 deaths in West Africa (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria). Of note, Nigeria has expanded to be an affected country of interest as transmission has occurred outside of the hospital. Recently, a person with EVD traveled to the country of Senegal. Senegal has not been officially classified as a country with local transmission but efforts to ascertain the Ebola situation there are ongoing. Another outbreak of EVD, unrelated to the situation in West Africa is occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As a result we recommend including the countries Senegal and DRC with Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria in triage screening procedures to facilitate early identification of persons potentially exposed to EVD. An updated sign is attached and we suggest that it be placed at points of patient entry into emergency departments, hospitals, and clinics.

This outbreak is rapidly evolving, and so is our understanding. CDC guidance documents have been changing almost weekly. Included below are links to a variety of updated guidance documents to aid in managing potential EVD exposures or EVD patients. We have also attached the most recent World Health Organization (WHO) weekly situation report for your interest.

Several hospitals in Arkansas have instituted a simple preventive measure to aid in rapid identification of potentially EVD-exposed patients. They have added a single question to their triage process inquiring "Have you traveled anywhere outside of the country in the last 21 days?". An affirmative answer would prompt some additional probing to determine if the patient has been to any of the involved countries, but a 'no' answer would be very reassuring that the person likely does not have an unusual tropical disease. This intervention would not exclude tropical diseases with long incubation periods but would exclude the majority of infectious diseases that could mimic EVD. We suggest you consider implementing this measure to screen patients for risk of Ebola infection.

As the situation evolves, the ADH will provide updated information. Please feel free to contact our Infectious Disease Branch at 501-537-8969 should you have any questions. After hours, please call 1-800-554-5738 for any Ebola-related concerns or to report a patient who is suspected to have Ebola virus infection.

### Links to updated Ebola-related information:

- West Africa Ebola outbreak website with current case counts and highlights - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/index.html>
- Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Hospitalized Patients with Known or Suspected Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever in U.S. Hospitals - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/infection-prevention-and-control-recommendations.html>
- Interim Guidance for Specimen Collection - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-specimen-collection-submission-patients-suspected-infection-ebola.html>
- Interim Guidance for Environmental Infection Control in Hospitals for Ebola Virus - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/environmental-infection-control-in-hospitals.html>
- Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-emergency-medical-services-systems-911-public-safety-answering-points-management-patients-known-suspected-united-states.html>
- Advice for Colleges, Universities, and Students about Ebola in West Africa - <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/advice-for-colleges-universities-and-students-about-ebola-in-west-africa>
- WHO Ebola website - <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>

