

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE (EVD)

Information sheet and a call to action!

The Ebola Viral Disease (EVD which has a fatality rate of between 25 to 90% is sweeping ferociously and wreaking havoc across some countries in west Africa namely Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea and has caused an unprecedented public health crisis in Africa.

1 - WHAT IS EBOLA?

Ebola virus disease belongs to the Filoviridae family. It's called "Filo" because it resembles a microscopic filament (thread like).

The Ebola virus is one of the most deadly diseases on the planet. It ranks level 4 in the classification of infectious biological agents, thus more infectious than HIV, hepatitis C and rabies.

2- HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

Transmission between humans occurs from contact with **the blood, the secretions (sneezing), the biological liquids** (saliva, blood, urine, faeces, vomit, sperm, sweat) of an infected person or via **a contaminated environment**.

Although the origin of the virus is still unknown, **fruit bats and bush meats are considered to be the natural reservoirs**. Contamination passes **from animals to humans** either through **handling the flesh of these infected animals** or **eating them**, particularly if **insufficiently cooked**.

3- HOW DOES THE DISEASE EVOLVE?

The Ebola virus invades the infected person's blood and cells. As the disease progresses, it generally attacks the vital organs, especially the kidneys and liver, and causes significant internal bleeding. Death can occur shortly after the first symptoms due to the failure of numerous organs and cardio-respiratory arrest.

The incubation period is 21 days. Symptoms appear within 8 to 10 days. Death may occur from day 14 to 26. **The risk of contamination increases throughout the incubation period and remains very high after the death of the infected person.** According to the WHO, contamination is still possible through sexual relations during the 3 months following recovery as the virus remains active in sperm during this time.

4- WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- High fever accompanied by asthenia, myalgia, headache and sore throat;
- Diarrhea, vomiting, skin rashes;
- Kidney failure and liver failure;
- Internal and external bleeding followed by death from cardio-respiratory shock in 50 to 90% of cases.

5- IS THERE ANY TREATMENT OR A CURE?

No specific treatment or vaccine has so far been licensed for the treatment of the Ebola virus. Several vaccines are being tested but none is available for clinical use.

Cases require intensive supportive care through

- **Intravenous fluids**
- **Electrolyte replacement**
- **Nutritional supplementation**

- **Treatment of complications**
- **Psychosocial support**

6- WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES PROPOSED BY THE WHO TO FIGHT EBOLA?

The World Health Organization has declared Ebola virus as an international public health emergency and adopted a global-scale action strategy.

A - Countries affected by at least one transmission

- Countries must declare a state of emergency and mobilise every possible means in their healthcare systems.
- They must also inform the population through, for example, village chiefs or religious representatives. The aim is to underline the basic safety principles.

B - Countries with one suspected or confirmed case or sharing borders with an affected country

- These countries must ensure close border surveillance and verify the temperature of all travellers transiting through international airports, ports and the main border checkpoints. In case of fever, the risk of Ebola must be assessed and the suspected person must be forbidden to travel.
- If the test for Ebola virus disease is positive, every possible confinement measure must be taken to prevent transmission, particularly medical surveillance of anyone who has been in contact with the sufferer

7- WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MOST AFFECTED AT THE MOMENT?

The epidemic of EVD is ongoing in parts of West Africa. It began in Guinea in December 2013 then spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone. A few much smaller subsidiary outbreaks have occurred elsewhere, with outbreaks in Nigeria and Senegal that appear to have been successfully contained.

8- HOW MANY CASES HAVE BEEN REPORTED WORLDWIDE?

As of 24 October 2014, the World Health Organization reported that there are eight confirmed cases of the deadly virus in Europe tied to the current outbreak: two dead missionaries in Spain, one dead doctor in Germany, one cured man and one doctor in treatment in Germany, two tropical disease doctors in treatment in Holland and a Spanish nurse under treatment in Spain. There are also at least a dozen or more suspect cases scattered around European hospitals that may or may not evolve into the full-blown virus. Two cases of infections of medical workers were also reported in the United States.

9- HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED SO FAR ?

As of 24 October 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a total of **12,008 suspected cases** and **5,078 deaths**. **Liberia (2,704), Guinea (981), Sierra Leone (1,341), Nigeria (8), Mali (1) US (1), Spain (2), Germany (1).**

10- WHAT CAN WORKERS DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES?

- ✓ **Limit all bodily contact (embraces, handshakes, etc.)**
- ✓ **Wash hands as frequently as possible with soap and water**
- ✓ **Do not touch or eat any animals found dead in the forest**
- ✓ **Avoid practicing traditional scarring and tattooing during the epidemic**
- ✓ **Anyone showing symptoms of the disease must immediately contact the nearest health centre**
- ✓ **Receive injections in protective conditions in line with standards**

- ✓ Do not remain close to an Ebola patient without protection
- ✓ Do not sleep in the same room as an Ebola patient
- ✓ Do not touch clothes and other objects soiled by sufferers
- ✓ Avoid all contact with vomit, blood or faeces from a person who is suffering or has suffered from Ebola
- ✓ Do not touch and/or wash corpses, which should be buried by care workers
- ✓ Care workers should be protected by personal protective equipment (PPE)
- ✓ Patients' clothes and sheets should be handled and burned by specialists wearing personal protective equipment
- ✓ Following recovery: sexual relations with a condom during 3 months, or no sexual relations for 3 months (the virus remains active in sperm during this time).

11- WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR EMPLOYEES?

- ✓ Develop a Business Continuity Planning (BCP) to protect businesses, employees and publics under possible pandemic situations.
- ✓ Identify key individuals in charge of critical activities, facilities, information...
- ✓ Provide adequate information, instruction and training to the workers.
- ✓ Apply protective measures in collaboration with health care authorities.

12- WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ✓ Assist with mass education
- ✓ Donate financial resources towards the fight against Ebola to:
CSI-Afrique, Centre Fopadesc , Agoe, Lome, BP: 4401- Togo.
Bank Account: 7080161408998902 with Ecobank.
Swift code: ECOCTGTG. When sending please indicate "Ebola Crisis Fund"

For more information please contact the secretariat of ITUC-Africa.

(Sources WHO, MSF, CDC, ILO)