

The Ebola virus is a severe illness in humans and outbreaks are taken very seriously by all working in the field of healthcare, as well as by the general public. The major focus of current concern continues to be the outbreaks in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. (Nigeria has been taken off the “country of concern” list). Although there have been a few cases reported in the United States and Europe, the main outbreak is confined to these three West African countries.

Like any other college, our campus plays host to many individuals who travel abroad as well as to those visiting from other countries.

St. Norbert College currently has no college-sponsored trips in which students or faculty are coming from or going to Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone,.

In collaboration with the De Pere Health department and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, SNC’s Health & Wellness staff have developed protocols to assess for the unlikely event of an Ebola exposure. Health & Wellness Services will ask anyone who has traveled to any of the affected countries or had possible exposure to any of the recent U.S. or European cases to self-monitor for symptoms. Very specific protocols have been developed to address the care and support of anyone who may be at risk of exposure and/or has a fever or other symptoms associated with Ebola. Should they be needed, these protocols will be implemented in consultation with the De Pere Health Department and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

### **Persons at risk and virus transmission**

Anyone who has traveled to Liberia, Sierra Leone or Guinea within the past 21 days and/or believes they were in contact with body fluids of someone who was exposed to, or has, Ebola may be at increased risk of contracting the disease.

Body fluids, including blood, urine, vomit, feces, semen, saliva and nasal secretions, can transmit the virus from an infected individual. The virus is not transmitted through the air, or through water or food (ingesting contaminated meat may be a source of exposure). Fomite (inanimate object) contamination with blood or body fluids may present another method of transmission. This pertains to contaminated objects like needles, clothing, personal care items, etc. Washing hands vigorously with soap and warm water for 30-60 seconds can provide a great deal of protection against a number of potential diseases.

### **How to monitor for symptoms and when to seek health care**

Any person who has recently traveled to Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia, or who has had close contact with an Ebola case in any country, should contact their local public health office and begin self-monitoring for three weeks from point of contact. An individual should record his/her temperature twice daily and observe for development of any sudden fever, muscle aches, diarrhea, vomiting, bleeding, rash or other symptoms consistent with Ebola. If any symptoms develop, the individual must isolate him or herself from others, put on a face mask and gloves and seek immediate medical attention. (Call rescue squad and emergency room in advance to indicate possible exposure to Ebola. This will allow emergency personnel to make arrangements to begin appropriate treatment and to prevent the potential spread to others). All areas and objects exposed

to this individual must be decontaminated by trained personnel with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment in place (local health departments can assist with this).

For more information about Ebola and about methods of preventing transmission, please see the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services website](#)

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/diseasepages/ebola.htm>

<https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/resources/ebola-virus-resources>

### **Ways to prevent illness**

Firstly, maintain good healthy practices like getting plenty of sleep, maintaining good nutrition, drinking plenty of water and increasing your physical activity to help your immune system best resist many infections.

Secondly, be aware that only individuals who have had contact with the Ebola virus are at risk of infection by this particular disease.

In general, treat any body fluid as though it is infectious for any disease:

- Hand-washing is the most important infection-control measure
- Avoiding hand contact with one's eyes, nose or mouth is also critical.
- When cleaning surfaces visibly contaminated by, for instance, blood, vomit, feces or urine, wear disposable impermeable gloves, face masks and eye protection.