

Update on Communicable Diseases in Returning Travelers

There have been recent outbreaks of communicable diseases in other parts of the world. [Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever](#) has occurred in parts of West Africa, specifically in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria.

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by a virus. It was first identified in Africa in 1976 and there have been periodic and localized outbreaks since.

How is Ebola spread?

Ebola is **NOT** spread through the air, or through contaminated water or food. Ebola is spread by touching bodily fluids from a person who is sick with or who died from Ebola or through contact with contaminated objects such as needles.

How likely is it that a traveler to West Africa would be at risk for contracting Ebola?

At this time, Health Authorities have defined both high risk and low risk exposures. Walking by a person with Ebola does not qualify as even a low risk exposure.

What if I am a student returning from traveling in affected countries in West Africa?

Persons arriving in the U.S. from an affected area or any traveler should monitor their health and if feeling sick, contact their health provider **immediately** and tell him or her about their recent travel and potential contacts **before they go to the doctor's office or emergency room to prevent potential transmission to others.**

Specifically, if you are traveling from West Africa, and have come in contact with animals or contaminated objects, you should monitor your health for a **minimum of 10 days** for any of the following symptoms: fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain or loss of appetite. If you suspect you may have been exposed to the virus you should monitor your health for **21 days**. For more information, please visit the [CDC](#) for the latest updates.

Students, Fellows and Scholars should contact their private health care provider or Campus Health Services at (919) 966-2281 and ask to speak with a Registered Nurse. This number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week <https://campushealth.unc.edu/general-info/contact-us>.

What is the risk to a roommate if their roommate or suitemate traveled to West Africa?

Ebola is not spread through air, water, or food. You can live with a roommate or attend class with a student who has been to an affected area without putting yourself at risk. You can only get Ebola from touching bodily fluids from a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola, or from exposure to contaminated objects, such as needles.