



Ebola Questions and Answers for Customer Service Representatives and Field Staff

These questions and answers have been developed for staff in Rhode Island who provide field visits and/or direct services to the community. This information will be updated as needed. For additional timely updates we encourage you to visit the [CDC website](#) or the [Rhode Island Department of Health website](#).

Q. What should I do to protect my health if I come in contact with customers or clients who have recently returned from a country where the Ebola outbreaks are happening?

A. In Rhode Island, only people who have been in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone in the past three weeks are at risk of developing Ebola. Ebola poses little risk to the US general population and is not contagious until symptoms appear. It is spread through direct contact with blood or body fluids (such as urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of an infected person, or with objects like needles that have been contaminated with the virus.

You CAN'T get Ebola through:

- Casual contact with someone who has no symptoms of the disease
- Air
- Water
- Food in the US

For more information on how Ebola spreads, see this [infographic from the CDC](#).

To date, no one has become infected with Ebola within Rhode Island. Since August 2014, the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) has investigated a number of healthcare providers' reports of possible Ebola cases, and through CDC consultation, screening, and testing, HEALTH has ruled out all patients as cases.

In addition, on October 17 HEALTH started conducting daily post-arrival monitoring of travelers to Rhode Island whose travel originated in Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone. Travelers from these countries are arriving in the United States through one of five airports. Monitoring will continue for the 21 days after individuals' last possible exposure

to Ebola. (Twenty-one days is the longest time it can take from the time a person is infected with Ebola until that person has symptoms of Ebola.)

Ebola symptoms include fever, severe headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, unexplained bleeding or bruising, and lack of appetite.

It is always good to avoid contact with anyone who is sick and to wash your hands regularly. Use soap and water if available, or use hand sanitizer. Doing so can help you prevent getting sick from many different illnesses.

If you have concerns about a potential exposure to someone who recently returned from Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone and who may have symptoms of Ebola, call HEALTH at 401-222-8022.

Q. What can I do to help my clients/customers stay safe if they or their friends/family members have recently returned from travel in Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone?

A. Consider sharing these resources with them:

- Ebola information for travelers on the HEALTH website at www.health.ri.gov/ebola
- An [infographic](#) about what to do if you've traveled to West Africa (Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone).

Be aware that on October 17 HEALTH started conducting daily post-arrival monitoring of travelers to Rhode Island whose travel originated in Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone. Travelers from these countries are arriving in the United States through one of five airports. Monitoring will continue for the 21 days after individuals' last possible exposure to Ebola. (Twenty-one days is the longest time it can take from the time a person is infected with Ebola until that person has symptoms of Ebola.)

Q. What should I do if one of my clients/customers has ties to outbreak regions?

Share everything you know about how Ebola is transmitted and how it can be prevented. There is a lot of information available on the HEALTH website at www.health.ri.gov/ebola. Encourage your clients/customers to share this information with their friends and family members in Liberia, Guinea, or Sierra Leone.

Q. Will employees who work directly with the public receive face masks or other protective gear?

A. Employees and members of the public are not being advised to wear protective equipment in the course of everyday activities. There are currently no known cases of Ebola in Rhode Island. For employees who work in a healthcare setting, guidelines for infection prevention and control have been issued and are posted on the CDC and HEALTH websites.

Q. How can I protect myself from infectious diseases while on the job?

A: While there are no known cases of Ebola in Rhode Island, you can take steps to stay healthy and lower your risk of catching and spreading any infectious disease, including the flu. These steps include:

- Wash your hands often. Hand washing is one of the simplest and most effective means of preventing the spread of flu and other infectious diseases. Wash your hands before handling food, eating or drinking, smoking, brushing teeth, and engaging in any activity that involves hand-to-mouth contact. For more information on proper hand washing, see the HEALTH website at www.health.ri.gov/ebola.
- If you have limited access to soap and water in the field, use alcohol-based hand gel.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Notify your supervisor of any hazardous conditions. If you believe the site where you are working or visiting presents risks of exposure to blood, body fluids, or other exposures to infectious diseases, leave the site and call your supervisor.
- Get a flu vaccine. While there is no vaccine to prevent Ebola, the flu vaccine is widely available, safe, and your best defense against the flu. See the HEALTH website at www.health.ri.gov/ebola for more information on where to get vaccinated.

Q. How can I protect others from infectious disease while in the field?

A. You can take many steps:

- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand gel often. Wash your hands after using the toilet, coughing or sneezing into your hands, and engaging in any activity that may have contaminated hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Cover your coughs and sneezes to prevent others from getting sick.
- If you are sick, stay home and don't spread germs.

Q. What should I do if an individual is visibly ill and/or vomits in the office or while I am in the field?

A. Ask these screening questions:

1. Any recent travel within 21 days to Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Guinea?
If no, proceed to question 2.
If yes, proceed to question 3.
2. Any contact with an individual with confirmed Ebola Virus Disease?
If no, address the situation as per standard operating procedure.
If yes, proceed to question 3.
3. Does the person have any of these symptoms? Fever (subjective or $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 100.4°F), diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, chills, weakness, joint or muscle aches, headache, lack of appetite
If no, stop here.
If yes, initiate the following actions.
 - Keep a distance of at least 3 feet from the person and instruct all persons in the vicinity to keep the same distance.
 - Instruct the person to stay in place.
 - Let the person know that you are calling 911-EMS to get help.
 - Call 911-EMS and state that there is a person with possible Ebola infection.
 - Do not touch the person's belongings, blood or body fluids or any materials with the person's blood or body fluids on them.
 - Do not attempt any cleaning or disinfection.
 - Call HEALTH at 401-222-2577 or after hours at 401-272-5952.
 - Instruct anyone who may have come into contact with the person, or blood or body fluids from the person, to call HEALTH.

Note: this guidance applies to non-medical offices. [Guidance for outpatient medical settings](#) is available on the HEALTH website.

Q. I'm a supervisor. How can I protect staff who provide field visits and/or direct services to the community?

A. You can take steps to protect your staff from infectious diseases and other hazardous situations:

- Encourage staff to get a flu vaccine to protect themselves and others from the flu.
- Hand sanitizer should be used by field staff or others with limited access to soap and water. Insect/tick repellent should be used by staff at risk of exposures to these vectors.
- Staff suffering from illness should go home to recover.
- If staff members call from the field with concerns about Ebola infection, staff should call HEALTH at 401-222-2577 or after hours at 401-272-5952.