

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection

What Is Ebola and How Do People Catch It?

The virus is spreading quickly in West Africa, but it has little chance of reaching the U.S.

Source: Howard Bennett/Washington Post/ September 23, 2014

Over the past month, you may have heard people talking about the Ebola virus. You may have also seen something about it on television, in the newspaper or on the Internet.

The reason for this is because an outbreak of Ebola started in West Africa in March. So far, the virus has infected nearly 6,000 people in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Senegal.

What is Ebola?

The Ebola virus was discovered in two African countries (Sudan and Congo, then known as Zaire) in 1976. The affected region in Congo was near the Ebola River, which is how the virus got its name.

Scientists believe the virus spread to humans who had contact with the blood or bodily fluids of infected animals, including bats, monkeys, chimpanzees, gorillas, forest antelope and porcupines.

There have been a number of Ebola outbreaks since 1976, but the current one is the largest. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, says the current outbreak could reach 1.4 million cases by early next year.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, muscle aches, weakness, sore throat and headache. These symptoms are followed by vomiting, diarrhea and a rash. As the infection progresses, many people develop bleeding in the internal organs and outside openings of their body.

How do people catch Ebola?

Ebola spreads from person to person, but it is not as contagious as the flu or cold viruses. Influenza and colds are spread through airborne contact. This means the virus can travel from one person to another through the air. It usually occurs from a sneeze. Ebola can be spread among humans only through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids (saliva, mucus, etc.) of an infected person. This can occur by touching the infected person or by touching objects (such as needles) the person has been in contact with.

Will the disease come to the United States?

A recent survey found that 1 in 4 Americans is worried that an outbreak of Ebola could happen in the United States. President Obama reassured the public at a recent news conference that the chances of this happening “are extremely low.” The same thing has been said by CDC experts.

Have any Americans been infected during this outbreak?

Three Americans working in Liberia have been infected with Ebola since July. Two of them (one a doctor) were aid workers helping people who were infected with the virus. One of the Americans died, but the two aid workers were flown to the CDC for treatment. They both survived.

An American doctor working in Sierra Leone also contracted the virus and is receiving treatment in Atlanta.

What is being done to stop the spread of Ebola?

To stop the spread of the disease, the World Health Organization and the CDC have been working with the governments of the affected countries to treat sick patients and contain the virus. (Ebola is more likely to spread in poor countries with limited access to clean water, proper sanitation and a well-developed health-care system.)

Patients with Ebola are isolated from other people. Doctors and other aid workers wear protective clothing to keep them from coming in contact with the bodily fluids of infected people.

In some countries, schools have been closed and air travel has been stopped to prevent anyone who might be in the early stages of the disease from spreading it to other countries.

Ebola Crisis: Obama Says World Falling Short in Response

'It's Not Enough,' President Obama Says; World Bank Makes New Pledge

Source: Carol E. Lee and Jeffrey Sparshott/Wall Street Journal/September 25, 2014

UNITED NATIONS—President Barack Obama criticized the international response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa as falling short of what is needed to combat a crisis "spreading at alarming speed."

Mr. Obama, in remarks during a high-level United Nations meeting on the outbreak, said the disease could kill hundreds of thousands of people if global institutions and individual nations don't quickly commit more resources to fighting the epidemic.

"It isn't enough," Mr. Obama said of the response so far. "There's still a significant gap between where we are and where we need to be."

Specifically, Mr. Obama said institutions like the U.N. need to move faster, and more countries need to contribute health-care workers, equipment and assistance with air transport and medical evacuations.

"If ever there were a public-health emergency deserving of an urgent, strong and coordinated international response, this is it," Mr. Obama said, calling the epidemic a threat to global security.

Last week, Mr. Obama announced a stepped-up U.S. effort to combat Ebola, dispatching about 3,000 military personnel to West Africa to coordinate international aid, build treatment centers and train health-care workers.

The World Bank on Thursday pledged an additional \$170 million to help the worst-hit West African nations deal with the humanitarian and economic crisis, bringing its total commitment to \$400 million.

Mr. Obama warned other nations not to be complacent given the increased U.S. response. "Do not stand by thinking somehow because of what we've done it's taken care of. It isn't."

The WHO on Wednesday said the number of confirmed Ebola cases, as of Sept. 21, had reached 6,263, including 2,917 deaths. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are the hardest-hit nations. The agency has warned that the number of cases could grow exponentially—with more than 20,000 infected by early November—unless new measures are adopted to counter the virus.

In the worst case modeled by the CDC, 550,000 people to as many as 1.4 million people could be infected by mid-January in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Possible Response Questions:

- Should Americans be concerned about the Ebola outbreak in Africa? Explain.
- Conduct additional research on the Ebola virus and share what you have learned
- Select any passage and respond to it.