



## UN Medical Services Division

### Travel Health Advisory for UN Staff or Personnel Travelling to Ebola-Affected Countries<sup>1</sup>

25 August 2014

The UN Medical Services Division (MSD) is monitoring closely the developments in the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in West Africa and is supporting the preparedness and response efforts of our UN health facilities in affected countries.

In line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations, MSD does not recommend a general ban on international travel. Each UN organization should assess the risk of duty travel of their staff to areas affected by Ebola in keeping with their health and safety obligations to staff. These areas may expose workers to an increased risk, and due consideration should be taken of the criticality of the activity to be performed during the duty travel, and every effort made to ensure staff health and safety and to minimize the risks of infection.

For the most updated information and list of countries affected in this recent outbreak, please consult the WHO's Ebola website at <http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/ebola/en/>

#### **Recommendations to all UN Staff and Personnel**

Ebola virus disease is a rare and severe viral disease. The virus can infect both humans and non-human primates (monkeys, gorillas, etc.) When infected, people can get very sick, with fever, intense weakness, headache, sore throat and pains, and may bleed from different parts of the body (i.e., hemorrhage). There is currently no licensed vaccine or specific treatment for Ebola.

The risk of travelers becoming infected after a stay in Ebola outbreak areas is low because transmission can only occur in the context of direct contact with blood, secretions, organs or other body fluids of dead or living infected persons or animals. The risk may increase, however, for staff or personnel who in the course of their duties or personal dealings have direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected patients, infected animals, or bodies of persons or animals who died from Ebola virus disease.

The UN Medical Services Division recommends all UN staff and personnel travelling to an Ebola outbreak area to avoid all direct contact with a person or corpse infected with the Ebola virus. Staff should also avoid all physical contact with any person or animal suspected of having Ebola virus disease, and avoid all contact with body fluids from persons or animals suspected of having Ebola virus disease. Travelers should be reminded of the need to immediately seek medical attention at the first sign of illness.

For all travel, staff should consult a health care provider or visit a travel health clinic before travel, preferably at least six weeks before intended date of departure. If you are planning to visit a locality affected by or adjacent to the current Ebola outbreak, you should also have a discussion with your

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<sup>1</sup> The latest figures and geographic location of the Ebola outbreak in parts of West Africa can be obtained here: <http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/ebola/en/>

healthcare provider the week before departure, to obtain the most up-to-date information about risks of your intended destination.

Individuals planning to visit an Ebola-affected country should ensure to carry the attached “Clinical Assessment Form” with them to their destination. At their destination, prior to leaving the country, they should have the form completed by that duty station’s UN health care worker, before exiting the country.

Here are some important points about the transmission of Ebola and the precautions that should be taken to protect yourself and your family:

- **Avoid direct contact with blood and other bodily fluids of people with Ebola or unknown illnesses.**
  - Avoid direct contact with bodies of people who died of Ebola virus disease or unknown illnesses.
  - Avoid unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected person or a person recovering from Ebola virus disease.
  - Avoid contact with any objects, such as needles, that have been contaminated with blood or bodily fluids.
  - Health care workers should practice strict infection control measures including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e. gowns, surgical/medical masks, goggles and gloves).
  - Regular hand washing (or the use of alcohol hand-rub) is required after visiting any patients in hospital, as well as after coming in contact with any sick individual, even if they do not have Ebola virus disease.
- **Avoid close contact with or handling of wild animals.**
  - The following animals may be carriers: chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelope, pigs, porcupines, duikers, and fruit bats.
  - Remember, both live and dead animals can spread the virus.
  - Avoid handling and eating wild meat.
- **Know the symptoms of Ebola virus disease and see a health care provider immediately if symptoms of the disease develop.**
  - The symptoms of Ebola virus disease include: Sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat.
  - This is followed by vomiting, diarrhea, rash, impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.
  - Seek medical attention immediately if a fever and any of the above other symptoms arise during or after travel.
  - Be sure to tell your health care provider that you travelled to a region where Ebola virus disease was present.
- **Wherever possible, avoid receiving treatment in hospitals that are treating Ebola patients, unless you are referred to such a facility for isolation or treatment relating to Ebola virus disease.**

- Infected healthcare workers can transmit Ebola virus disease from one patient to another.
- Seek medical advice from your local UN clinic about where you can receive treatment for non-Ebola related illnesses or injuries.

For more information, please refer to the attached MSD Frequently Asked Questions on Ebola, or contact MSD at [msdpublichealth@un.org](mailto:msdpublichealth@un.org) if you have any questions related to this advisory. Please feel free to disseminate this information sheet as needed.