

**Ebola Guidance Note** - concerning both the risks of students/ staff arriving in the UK from an affected country in West Africa developing Ebola in the UK, as well as the risks to travellers going to West Africa.

## **Health Protection Scotland – Advice and Risk Assessment for Universities and Further Education Establishments.**

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease occurring in West Africa. It was first reported in March 2014 in Guinea and since late May has now spread to involve four countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria (so far all the cases in Nigeria have been linked to transmission from a single imported case; there is no evidence of wider transmission in that country).

Ebola is a rare but serious viral infection. However, people in the UK are not likely to be at risk of Ebola as the virus is only transmitted by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. There have been no cases of Ebola Virus Disease contracted in the UK during the current outbreak and the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is very low.

It remains unlikely but not impossible that persons infected in Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK. The affected countries have introduced exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights. This is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidance and is one of many measures to reduce the risk of international spread of disease. However, as the time between contact with an infected person and symptoms first appearing can range from 2 – 21 days, it is possible that students returning from affected countries could develop symptoms up to three weeks after arrival.

In summary:

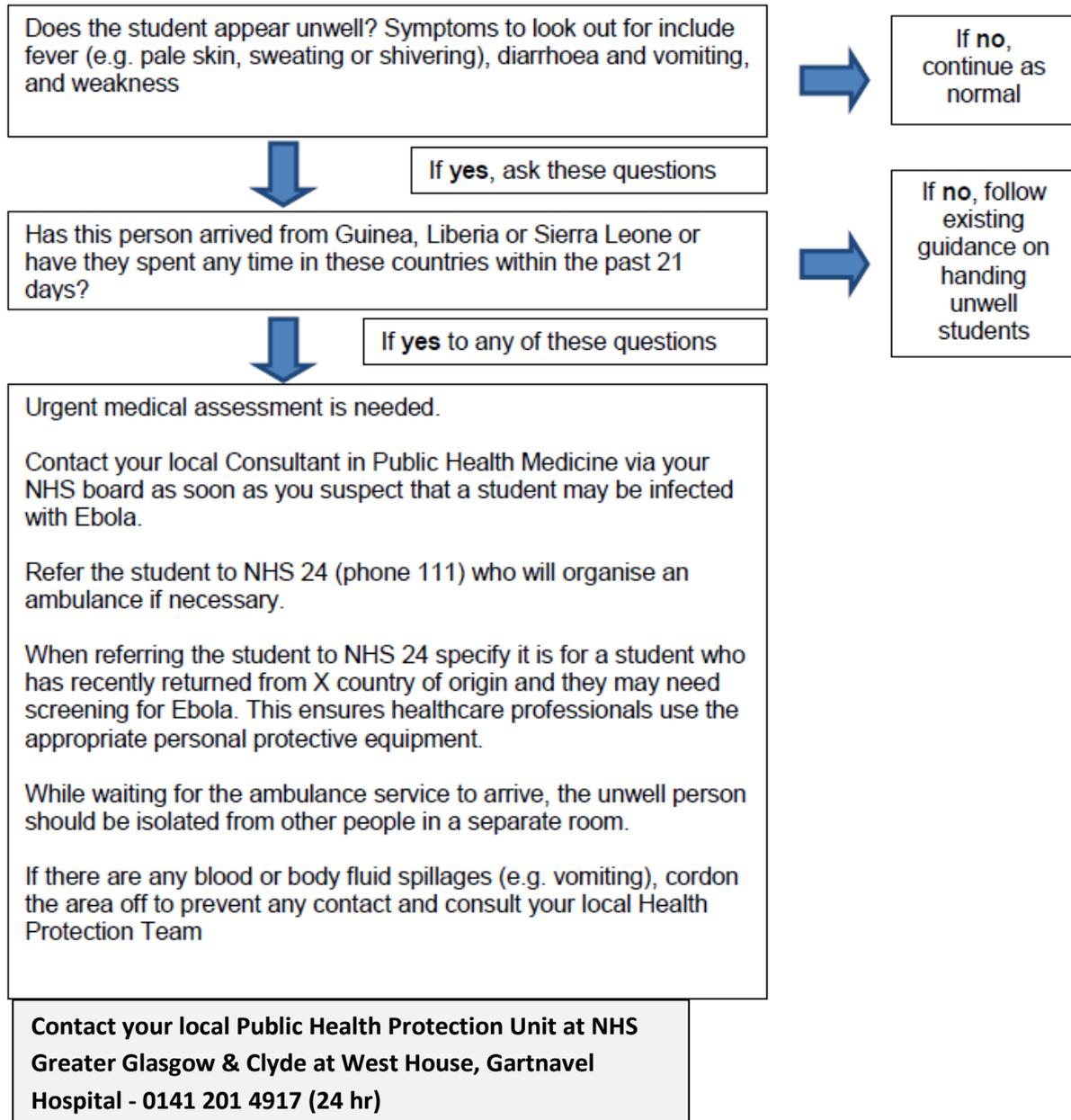
- the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is very low
- there have been several previous outbreaks of Ebola in other parts of Africa, but none have led to cases occurring in Europe
- transmission of Ebola from person to person is by direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an ill person with the disease; the virus is not spread by the airborne route
- the time between contact with the infected person and the time that first symptoms appear (incubation period) of Ebola ranges from 2 to 21 days
- any persons arriving back in the UK having travelled from any of the affected countries, and who are free of symptoms, are not infectious and there should be no restrictions on their education or normal activities.

The attached algorithm has been developed to assist staff in universities and other further educational establishments who may have students returning or visiting from affected countries.

All staff who have contact with students should be aware of what to do if a student falls ill and there is guidance on infection control in non-hospital settings.

## Ebola Risk Assessment in Further Educational Establishments

This algorithm is to inform the assessment of unwell students in further educational establishments, and will assist the public health response and ensure the appropriate organisations are informed. If the student is unable to answer questions, please seek information from an appropriate adult.



## **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control**

### **Information to Travellers**

#### **What is Ebola virus disease?**

Ebola is a severe disease, often fatal, caused by the Ebola virus.

It is transmitted through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids (e.g. saliva, urine, vomit, semen) from infected people, dead or alive.

Symptoms usually appear between two days and 21 days following exposure to the virus. The disease may start suddenly with fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, headache and muscle aches, or other non-specific symptoms. In a later stage, some patients may have profuse internal and external bleeding and multi-organ failure.

There is no licensed vaccine or validated treatment for the disease.

#### **Risk of infection with Ebola virus and how to avoid it**

Even if you are living in, or have travelled to, areas with community transmission, the risk of infection with Ebola virus is low, unless you have been directly exposed to the bodily fluids of dead or living infected persons or animals. Contact with bodily fluids includes unprotected sexual contact with patients up to three months after they have recovered.

Casual contact in public places with people that do not appear to be sick does not transmit Ebola. You cannot contract Ebola virus by handling money, groceries, or swimming in a pool. Mosquitoes do not transmit the Ebola virus. And Ebola virus does not transmit through the air as influenza does.

Ebola virus is easily killed by soap, bleach, sunlight, and high temperatures or drying. Machine-washing clothes that have been contaminated with fluids will destroy Ebola virus. Ebola virus survives only a short time on surfaces that are in the sun or have dried. It can survive for a longer time on clothes or materials which have been stained with blood or other bodily fluids.

There is a risk of transmission of Ebola through contact with utensils or contaminated material in healthcare settings if the correct infection control procedures are not properly carried out.

#### **Outbreak in 2014**

The World Health Organization declared the current outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone a 'Public Health Event of International Concern'. The following information provides advice for travellers arriving in, or departing from, areas with community transmission.

## **Information to people arriving in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other areas with community transmission**

Consult the advice provided by your national authorities on travel to countries with community transmission. If travelling to a country with community transmission, the following preventive measures should decrease the risk of getting infected:

- Avoid any contact with blood or bodily fluids of a patient or a corpse and possibly contaminated objects.
- Wash hands regularly, using soap or antiseptics.
- Avoid contact with wild animals, alive or dead; do not consume 'bushmeat'.
- Avoid habitats which might be populated by bats, such as caves, isolated shelters, or mining sites.
- Avoid having unprotected sexual intercourse.

You should be aware that there is an increased risk of infection in healthcare facilities. It is therefore prudent to:

- identify appropriate in-country healthcare facilities through your local business contacts, organisation, friends or relatives; and
- ensure that, in the event of any illness or accident, medical evacuation is covered by travel insurance, to limit exposure in local healthcare facilities.

## **Information to people departing from Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other areas with community transmission**

The risk that you have been exposed to the Ebola virus is low, unless you had contact with Ebola patients, touched infected corpses, or visited healthcare facilities.

However, if you develop fever, unexplained fatigue, diarrhoea or any other severe symptoms (e.g. vomiting, unexplained haemorrhage, and severe headache) in the three weeks after departure from an area with community transmission, you should:

- seek rapid medical attention mentioning your travel history, and
- contact the medical care facility by phone before your visit in order to enable medical personnel to prepare appropriate personal protection at the time of admission.

Please be aware that the World Health Organization has recommended that countries with Ebola transmission should conduct exit screening for unexplained illness consistent with potential Ebola virus infection, and that Ebola cases and their contacts should only travel if the travel is part of an appropriate medical evacuation.

## Home Office Travel advice in relation to the Ebola Outbreak

The current Home Office advice (05/03/2015), is to avoid all but essential travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, unless you are involved in the direct response to the Ebola outbreak. Advice on travel to Nigeria is summarised on the map below:



Further information about the Ebola outbreak can be obtained from your local health protection team and on the following websites:

### **Health Protection Scotland**

<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/travel/viralhaemorrhagicfever.aspx>

### **Public Health England (including the outbreak and maps of affected area)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinical-management-and-guidance>

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/index.html>

### **Ebola: environmental cleaning guidance for potential contamination (excluding healthcare settings)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-environmental-cleaning-guidance-for-potential-contamination-excluding-healthcare-settings>

### **Foreign travel advice**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>