**Questions and Answers**

**Surveillance and Contact Tracing**

**Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)**

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The following list of questions and answers on surveillance of Ebola virus disease (EVD) is aimed at health professionals and decision-makers. These questions and answers complement information already published in different documents and guidance available at [www.paho.org/ebola](http://www.paho.org/ebola).

1. **Is surveillance of travelers important to detect people with fever?**

All airports should have the capacity to assess and manage patients with fever who may have infectious diseases, in accordance with the stipulations of the International Health Regulations (IHR). In light of the [temporary recommendations](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2014/ebola-20140808/en/) issued by the WHO Director-General on 8 August 2014 and the continued low risk for the Americas, the challenge is to make rational use of the resources that may be needed to maintain that capacity.

1. **How should daily monitoring of people identified as contacts be conducted?**

Contact tracing consists of the following:

* Check temperature daily:
  1. *Self-check:* with a thermometer used exclusively by the person being monitored. In this case, virtual visual contact with the person is necessary (via camera, telephone with camera, etc.).
  2. *Checked by a health worker:* with a personal thermometer, a no-contact laser thermometer. , or a thermometer that requires contact but has an interchangeable sensor. Health workers do not need to use personal protective equipment when checking temperature.
* Observe the individual’s general condition. Any change must be reported to health workers.
* Ask about the onset of any symptoms, in particular headache, fever, malaise, vomiting, or nausea. In case of symptoms, the competent health authorities should be reported immediately.
* Note the result in the contact’s daily record.

Contacts are monitored for **21 days**, after which both the individual and the competent health authorities are notified.

*Note:* If the laboratory returns negative test results for the individual under investigation, monitoring of the corresponding contacts should be discontinued.

1. **Is quarantine of contacts recommended?**

There is no need for quarantine of contacts (since contacts are **asymptomatic and do not transmit the infection**). As soon as an individual develops symptoms, he/she is considered to be a case and must be isolated in a designated hospital.

Ideally, transportation should be in an ambulance (airplane or land vehicle) that can be subsequently cleaned and disinfected. The use of capsules is not necessary in this type of transportation.

1. **Should contacts continue with their usual routine during the monitoring period?**

**Shouldn’t they stay home?**

Asymptomatic contacts do not transmit the disease. Contacts should be monitored daily. In some circumstances, depending on (i) the authorities’ response capacity in terms of screening contacts, and (ii) the media, cultural, and social context, the authorities can make certain decisions with regard to contacts:

* Monitor contacts twice a day.
* Suggest voluntary adoption of behavior that limits movement or contact with people; for example, the contact could voluntarily stay home and avoid public places and groups of people (e.g. public transportation, school/university). Voluntarily restricting movement would also make it easier for the authorities to conduct daily monitoring and provide timely care.
* Implement legal measures to restrict people’s movement, within the legal framework of the country or corresponding jurisdiction.

1. **What action should be taken if the contact suddenly develops symptoms in a public setting (sudden onset)?**

Sudden onset of symptoms (for example, in public transportation) is an unlikely event. The contact should be instructed to immediately report to the health authorities.

If the contact is in public transportation or a public place and symptoms suddenly occur (for example, vomiting), the health authorities should be immediately notified and the patient should be transported to the designated hospital. Locating potential contacts related to this type of event depends on the country’s capacity to handle such a situation, for example, by making public announcements.

**References**

* Ebola virus disease (EVD), implications of introduction in the Americas. <http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&Itemid=270&gid=26416&lang=en>
* Contact tracing during an outbreak of Ebola Virus Diseases. September 2014. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Africa. Available at: http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/contact-tracing-during-outbreak-of-ebola.pdf?ua=1