



## Ebola: Global Health Emergency

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**World Health Organization** has announced the Ebola outbreak in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (a country in Central Africa) as the global health emergency.

- WHO defines a global emergency as an **“extraordinary event”** which constitutes a **risk** to other countries and requires a **coordinated international response**.
- A declaration of a global health emergency brings greater **international attention** and **aid** (both financial and technical) but should not be used to **stigmatise** or **penalise** the people by imposing **travel** or **trade restrictions** as those restrictions actually restrict the **flow of goods** and **health care workers** into affected countries and turn counter-productive.
- It can be noted that recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has released a list of **“Ten threats to global health in 2019”** which also included Ebola.

### Ebola Outbreak

- The 2014–2016 outbreak in **West Africa** was the largest Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976.
- The outbreak started in Guinea and then moved across land borders to **Sierra Leone** and **Liberia**.
- The current 2018-2019 outbreak in the **Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo** is highly complex.

### Ebola Virus Disease

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- **Ebola virus disease**, formerly known as **Ebola haemorrhagic fever**, is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human to human transmission.
- **Transmission: Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family** are natural Ebola virus hosts.
  - **Animal to human transmission:** Ebola is introduced into the human population through close contact with the **blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids** of **infected animals** such as fruit bats, chimpanzees, gorillas,

- monkeys, forest antelope or porcupines found ill or dead or in the rainforest.
- **Human-to-human transmission:** Ebola spreads via **direct contact** (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with:
    - **Blood or body fluids** of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola.
    - **Objects** that have been contaminated with **body fluids** (like blood, feces, vomit) from a person sick with Ebola or the body of a person who died from Ebola
  - **Symptoms:** symptoms of Ebola can be sudden and include:
    - Fever
    - Fatigue
    - Muscle pain
    - Headache
    - Sore throat
    - Vomiting
    - Diarrhoea
    - Symptoms of impaired kidney and liver function
    - In some cases, both internal and external bleeding
  - **Diagnosis:** It can be difficult to clinically distinguish Ebola from other infectious diseases such as **malaria**, **typhoid fever**, and **meningitis** but confirmation that symptoms are caused by Ebola virus infection are made using the following diagnostic methods:
    - **ELISA** (antibody-capture enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay)
    - **Antigen-capture** detection tests
    - **Serum** neutralization test
    - **Reverse transcriptase polymerase** chain reaction (RT-PCR) assay
    - Electron **microscopy**
    - **Virus isolation** by cell culture.