

3 Infections More Disquieting Than Ebola

As of this writing, more than 2,600 people have been afflicted by the Ebola outbreak, and it has killed at least 1,400 people in West Africa alone. And since the first U.S. case of Ebola was recorded in Texas, Americans were once again given a reason to panic. In fact, there has been an obsession to fear that the virus will sweep across the country and apparently, this is not a healthy kind of fear.

The Ebola case in Texas is an exception. This Ebola outbreak is a threat in any place where airplanes can land, although most countries—particularly the United States—already have the means to prevent the virus from spreading. Also, the incubation period is only two to 21 days, which means it is unlikely to spread undetected and kill thousands of people instantly.

The truth is there are other types of viruses and infections you should be worried about than Ebola. Yes, it may be hard to predict which bacteria and viruses you should be alarmed about, but there are those already existing that pose an ongoing threat. And these include:

1. Influenza/flu virus. There may be a flu vaccine, but did you know that it is still a major killer in the U.S.? In fact, Dr. Robert Schooley, chief of Infectious Diseases at the University of California at San Diego School of Medicine, said that more people will die during the winter from flu than Ebola.

Unfortunately, flu poses a serious threat, which is more than fever and muscle pain. In 2009, a different strain of the virus emerged that was not covered by that year's version of the vaccine and has affected not just the young and old but

mostly those who are in their prime. Dr. Liise-Anne Pirofski, chief of Infectious Diseases at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, explained that there are cases where young, healthy people's immune system may respond to the flu virus, and the resulting inflammation may worsen the illness.

2. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA. MRSA is a strain of staph bacteria that does not respond to antibiotics, which are traditionally used in treating infections. Based on the CDC Tracking Data, there are 75,309 cases of MRSA infection in the U.S. right now as opposed to the two current Ebola cases reported. Thankfully, this virus is slowly declining. However, there is no reason to be complacent since the resistant bacteria can still cause life-threatening infections.

According to Dr. Pirofski, antibiotic resistance is a major threat since these organisms cannot be controlled using existing therapies. At the same time, you don't have to go to West Africa to contract this virus since it is already present in hospitals and health care-provider settings, including the most advanced hospitals.

3. Resistant Gonorrhea. There is a way to treat gonorrhea, of which approximately 820,000 people in the U.S. are afflicted. But did you know that there is a form of the bacteria that does not respond to treatments? Sometime in 2000, strains of gonorrhea that were resistant to cephalosporins, the antibiotics used to treat this type of STD, showed up in East Asia. By 2013, the CDC reported an estimated 246,000 cases of resistant gonorrhea every year in the U.S. alone.

Why is it alarming? Resistant gonorrhea doesn't show any symptoms, allowing it to spread easily. It may not kill people, but it can cause pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility in women. Worse, the virus can spread to your blood, which can lead to disseminated gonococcal infection—a condition characterized by arthritis, inflammation covering

tendons and dermatitis.

Don Colbert, M.D. has been board certified in Family Practice for over 25 years and practices Anti aging and Integrative medicine. He is a New York Times Bestselling author of books such as The Bible Cure Series, What Would Jesus Eat, Deadly Emotions, What You Don't Know May be Killing You, and many more with over 10 million copies sold. He is the Medical Director of the Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Florida where he has treated more than 50,000 patients. He is also an internationally known expert and prolific speaker on Integrative Medicine.

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