

How to Protect Yourself From the Ebola Virus

America, and even much of the world, is currently captivated by the Ebola virus that has, since its discovery in 1976, killed fewer than 2,000 people.

The reason people are so frightened by the virus is because of two factors: There is no cure, and if you are infected with it, you are more likely to die than survive. The current outbreak carries with it a 55 percent death rate. Other outbreaks have soared into the 90 percent mortality range.

The good news is that Ebola is not spread in the air. You get it from direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids such as blood, sweat, vomit or feces. So for developed countries, that is encouraging because the Ebola virus can be killed simply with soap and warm water.

With that in mind, one wonders how more than 1,000 people have contracted it. The answer is, they don't wash their hands. They don't even wear gloves in hospitals, oftentimes, wear protective masks, or even use disinfectant and clean needles!

They touch—with their bare hands—dead people who haven't even been washed, who've died from Ebola, at funerals.

Fortunately, in recent days, through education and the involvement of other countries, these practices are changing. There are now buckets of diluted bleach scattered about villages for people to wash their hands. Some African governments are insisting that Ebola victims be cremated, and hospitals are receiving the gloves, masks, and needles they need.

The two American aide workers who contracted Ebola in Africa are back in America now, reportedly undergoing both

traditional and experimental treatments.

Traditional treatments include strengthening the patient's immune system to help the body naturally fight off the virus. This means balancing their fluids, maintaining their oxygen levels and blood pressure, and treating them for any complicating infections.

The experimental treatment includes taking a drug called ZMapp, developed by a California-based biotech company called Mapp. The drug has reportedly only been tested on monkeys so far. But it was successful in those trials.

The ZMapp three-antibody cocktail isn't a vaccine. Instead, it provides an artificial immune response against proteins on the outside of the Ebola virus.

It's highly unusual for humans to receive drugs like ZMapp that have not completed the series of trials, including human testing, required by the Food And Drug Administration. However, the FDA does allow the use of a drug before its approval, in extreme cases, if a patient's situation warrants.

It's unclear why the American patients are not taking an experimental Ebola drug developed by a Canadian company, Tekmira Pharmaceuticals, as their drug has advanced to human trials. However, like ZMapp, it has also not yet been approved for general use.

Considering the deaths of about 900 African Ebola victims with this current outbreak, both drugs may be fast-tracked for approval to treat the victims there.

Meanwhile, an Ebola vaccine is in the works, but reportedly still a ways off.

Symptoms of Ebola are much like the flu:

- Fever;
- Headache;

- Joint and muscle aches;
- Sore throat;
- Weakness;
- Diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain.

In some cases, the disease causes rashes, red eyes, and hiccups.

Unfortunately, a person can be infected, and contagious for a couple of days up to a few weeks before they start experiencing symptoms. That means infected people can literally travel the world virtually undetected.

Ebola kills by destroying the function of critical organs such as the liver and kidneys, as well as causing extensive internal and even external, bleeding.