**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS TAKEN FROM THE HUNT REGIONAL HEALTHCARE WEBSITE**

Ebola Virus Preparedness

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Although it is unlikely that Hunt County will see an Ebola case, we recognize that with the diagnosis of a North Texas patient, the risk level is elevated. As a proactive measure, we have implemented additional safety and screening protocols to ensure patient and staff safety. To answer questions that you may have, we have prepared the information below. For more extensive information regarding Ebola, please refer to the CDC website.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How do you get the Ebola virus?**

Ebola isn’t as contagious as more common viruses, such as colds or seasonal flu. Ebola is not spread through the air or by water. Ebola can only be spread to others after symptoms begin. Symptoms can appear from 2 to 21 days after exposure, but the average is 8 to 10 days. Ebola is contracted in one of three ways:

1. Direct contact with the body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola including blood, vomit, urine, feces, sweat, semen, spit or other fluids.

2. By touching objects contaminated with the virus including needles or other medical equipment.

3. Infection via animal transmission (by contact with blood or fluids of infected meat).

**What are the symptoms of Ebola?**

At first, the symptoms are like a bad case of the flu. Patients may experience high fever, muscle aches, headache, sore throat and weakness. Those symptoms are quickly followed by vomiting, diarrhea and internal and external bleeding. Bleeding and bruising is often unexplained. Symptoms can appear from 2 to 21 days after exposure, but the average is 8 to 10 days.

**When is someone able to spread the disease to others?**

Ebola only spreads when people are sick. A patient must have symptoms to spread the disease to others. After 21 days, if an exposed person does not develop symptoms, they will not become sick with Ebola.

**Is Hunt Regional Medical Center able to care for an Ebola patient?**

As a precaution, Hunt Regional Medical Center has added a travel screening question to the admit process for all emergency room patients. The Hunt Regional infection control team will respond appropriately to any patients exhibiting symptoms.

Infection control precautions at Hunt Regional include isolating the patient and ensuring that trained staff members use personal protective equipment, allowing care to be provided in a setting that safeguards other patients and the medical staff.

**How do you test for Ebola?**

If doctors suspect Ebola, they use multiple blood tests to quickly identify the virus, including:

* Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)
* Reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (PCR)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention monitors the United States for conditions such as Ebola infection, and its labs can test for the Ebola virus.

**How is Ebola treated?**

There is no specific treatment for Ebola. The only treatments available are support medicines, such as IV fluids, blood pressure medication, respirators and transfusions. Recovery from Ebola depends on the patient’s immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years. Although no cure or vaccine currently exists for Ebola, scientists are working on both, along with experimental treatments.

**What if I am traveling out of the country?**

The CDC says if you must travel to an area affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak, protect yourself by doing the following:

* Wash hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* Avoid contact with blood and body fluids of any person, particularly someone who is sick.
* Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids.
* Do not touch the body of someone who has died from Ebola.
* Do not touch bats and primates or their blood and fluids and do not touch or eat raw meat prepared from these animals.
* Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. The United States Embassy or consulate is often able to provide advice on medical facilities.
* Seek medical care immediately is you develop fever and any of the other following symptoms: headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain or unexplained bruising or bleeding.

**How do I protect myself against Ebola?**

Frequent hand washing is important for fighting off any contagious disease. Ebola is very hard to contract. Infected people are contagious only after symptoms appear, by which time close contacts, such as health care workers and family members, would use universal infection control precautions. Even though the virus can be transmitted by kissing or sexual contact, people with Ebola symptoms are so sick that they’re not typically taking part in those behaviors.