



Because of the current the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa, Western Carolina University officials have been reviewing Western Carolina University's communicable disease plans since mid-August and will continue to monitor the rapidly evolving situation for the foreseeable future. This message is part of an ongoing series of detailed communications to the campus community regarding our preparedness planning and the status of this outbreak.

If You Have Traveled to West Africa:

First and foremost, if you have traveled to affected areas of West Africa or have had possible exposure to the Ebola virus, you should monitor your health conditions. Keep in mind that Ebola is very difficult to contract and is spread **ONLY** by close contact with the bodily fluids of a very sick person. Symptoms of Ebola are very similar to symptoms of seasonal flu, and health experts encourage those who have not been vaccinated against the flu to do so as soon as possible. Symptoms of Ebola include fever, severe headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

If You Think You Are Infected:

If you are experiencing these symptoms, contact your primary health care provider immediately to report your recent travel and potential contacts. It is recommended that you do so before going to the doctor's office or emergency room, in order to prevent potential transmission to others.

Instructions for Students Needing Care:

Students should contact University Health Services at 828-227-7640 and ask to speak with a registered nurse for answers to questions about Ebola. Faculty and staff members should contact their primary care provider or University Health Services for more information. Detailed information about Ebola is posted on the [University Health Services webpage](#).

Federal Travel Warnings:

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [U.S. Department of State](#) have issued warnings that restrict nonessential travel to the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In addition, the CDC has issued an alert with enhanced precautions recommended when traveling to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a watch in place for travel to Nigeria.

The university may consider additional restrictions on travel, given the dynamic and rapidly unfolding events surrounding the Ebola outbreak. For example, WCU may request that individuals who chose to travel to affected areas follow voluntary quarantine restrictions upon return, as recommended by university and public health officials. We will apprise the campus as quickly as possible as additional decisions are made.

Please keep in mind that the risk of exposure to Ebola at WCU is extremely low. Nevertheless, the university is treating the situation very seriously. We are acting out of an abundance of caution based on, above all else, our core value of keeping our campus community safe and healthy.

Amended campus-wide communication from David Belcher, Chancellor of Western Carolina University. Emphasis and section headings added by International Programs and Services for clarification.