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## Understanding Ebola: Information for Head Start and Early Head Start Parents

With all the talk of Ebola in the news, it is natural for parents and guardians to be concerned. It is very unlikely that you or your children will be exposed to Ebola, but you may have questions. This fact sheet provides information that is helpful to you as a parent or caregiver and answers questions you may have about Ebola.

### What is Ebola?

Ebola is a serious illness caused by the Ebola virus. Ebola symptoms include:

- Fever
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach pain
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after coming in contact with someone sick from Ebola. Symptoms commonly appear after 8 to 10 days.

### How is Ebola Spread?

Ebola virus is spread through direct contact with the blood or body fluids (such as feces, saliva, sweat, urine, vomit, or semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola. The virus in blood and body fluids can enter another person's body through broken skin or through the eyes, nose, or mouth.

- **You cannot get Ebola through air or by water, or by any food grown or sold legally for eating in the United States.**
- **You cannot be infected by someone who has been exposed to Ebola but does not have symptoms.**

### Is My Child at Risk?

**Children are at greater risk from seasonal flu than they are from the Ebola virus. Unless you or your child has had direct contact with the blood or body fluids of someone who is sick with Ebola, you and your children are not at risk.**

### What Can I Do to Keep My Family Healthy?

There are everyday steps that you can take at home to prevent the spread of illnesses:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Clean household surfaces such as countertops, doorknobs, sinks, and toilets.
- Dirty sheets from cribs or cradles should be kept away from other dirty laundry. Dirty sheets should be washed using hot or cold water and regular drying cycles.
- You can clean surfaces with household cleaners containing bleach. **Remember to air out rooms when using household bleach and never mix bleach with other cleaners that have ammonia or vinegar.**
- If you provide care to other children who are sick, wear gloves when treating a scrape or changing a diaper. These gloves and other materials (used bandages or diapers) should be removed and safely thrown away to avoid contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth. *Wash your hands again after removing gloves.*
- Remember to clean thermometers after each use.
- If you have **recently** traveled to West Africa or may have been exposed to an Ebola patient, be sure to follow your local public health agency's instructions.

- Take care of yourself!

#### Where Can I Learn More?

- For more information on Ebola, consult your state or local public health agency or the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) Ebola page.
- The Administration for Children and Families provides additional [resources on emergency preparedness for parents of children birth to five](#).
- Health resources for Head Start grantees is available from the [National Center on Health](#).