

Information to Help You Respond to Traveler Questions about the Sexual Spread of Ebola

How is Ebola spread?

- Ebola is spread by **direct contact** (through broken skin or mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth)
 - with the blood or body fluids (such as urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola;
 - with objects (like needles and syringes) contaminated with body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola;
 - with infected fruit bats and primates (apes and monkeys); and
 - possibly with semen from a man who has recovered from Ebola (for example, contact during oral, vaginal, or anal sex).

What is known about the possible sexual transmission of Ebola?

- It is possible that Ebola can be spread from a male survivor to his sex partner(s) through direct contact with his semen. This information is based on an ongoing CDC investigation involving a Liberian woman who tested positive for Ebola, whose only reported contact was sex with an Ebola survivor.
- The risk of getting Ebola from semen is considered to be very low and likely decreases over time.
- It is not known for how long Ebola could be spread through semen, but the virus has been found in the semen of some men more than six months after they recovered from Ebola.
- It is not yet known if Ebola can be spread through sex from a female survivor to her sex partner(s).
- It is thought that the Ebola virus can live in semen longer than in other body fluids (including vaginal fluids) because the body's natural defenses (immune system) are not very active in the testicles. This means the body takes longer to eliminate the virus from the testicles.
- Scientists are studying whether Ebola can be spread to others through the sexual fluids of those who have recovered from Ebola, and if so, for how long. CDC will share what is known as more information becomes available.

What should Ebola survivors and their partners do to be safe?

Until more is known, CDC recommends:

- Avoiding contact with semen from a male Ebola survivor.
- Using a condom every time during sex (including oral, vaginal, and anal sex) -- from start to finish.
- Washing hands and other body parts that may come into contact with semen, using soap and water for 20–30 seconds. It is still safe to touch other body fluids from a partner who has recovered from Ebola, like spit (kissing) and sweat.

Key Points

- It is possible that Ebola may be spread through direct contact with semen of male Ebola survivors.
- It is not yet known for how long Ebola could be spread through semen after recovery.
- Until more is known, all contact with the semen of Ebola survivors should be avoided. Male survivors and their partners should use a condom every time they have sex (from start to finish), and wash their hands and any body parts that come into contact with semen immediately after sex.

Please encourage travelers to visit www.cdc.gov/ebola or contact their state or local health department for additional information.

Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

