

For YMCA Members and Participants: Understanding the Ebola Virus and Other Enteroviruses

As you may be aware, there are growing concerns across the country as several viruses and enteroviruses continue to spread. Also, with winter approaching, flu season is upon us. As part of our partnership with the Y, the Nonprofit Risk Management Center has created this list of tips and information to help you and your families stay healthy!

Ebola and the D68 virus are both making headlines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Ebola does not pose a significant threat to the U.S. population. However, the symptoms for Ebola and D68 can be very similar to the flu, so following these tips can help you stay well. Also, keep in mind that the flu is contagious to others before one feels unwell, while Ebola is only contagious once the infected person has a high fever. Only the flu and D68 can be spread through the air. Anyone who is unwell should stay home. To prevent infection, follow these tips:

1. **Wash your hands frequently.** Keeping your hands clean by washing regularly with soap and warm water is one of the best ways to keep yourself healthy and stop the spreading of disease. When should you wash them? Anytime your hands are visibly dirty, contaminated or soiled, after using the restroom, before and after meals, after you cough or sneeze, or any other time you feel it would be helpful! The CDC recommends that after lathering with soap, you scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds before rinsing.
2. **Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.** Even when you are unable to wash your hands with soap and water, you can make sure your hands are clean from harmful germs that may infect you. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers such as Purell® or Germ-X® can be very useful in combating germs. They are fast-acting, convenient, and generally can be used for all situations. When buying sanitizers, make sure they contain 60-95 percent ethanol or isopropanol alcohol, since this has been found to be more effective than lower-concentration solutions.
3. **Get your flu shot.** Besides keeping your hands clean, getting a flu vaccine every year is one of the best ways to prevent getting the flu. The flu shot is recommended for anyone six months of age or older and is available at drug stores, grocery stores, local health departments and your local doctor's office.
4. **Avoid touching your face.** Even once you've made sure your hands are clean, don't touch your face. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. This is an easy way to prevent the spread of potentially harmful germs!
5. **Cover your nose and mouth.** If you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Make sure you throw tissues away after they are used. If you can't find a tissue, cover your mouth with your elbow or sleeve—never your hand! Afterward, remember to wash your hands!

6. **If you are sick, try to stay away from others.** If you have to leave your home, keep a distance of at least three feet away from other people. If you think you may have a contagious disease, wear a surgical mask if possible. If you plan to visit the doctor, try to call ahead and explain your symptoms. That way the doctor can prepare, and you will spend less time in the waiting area where you might infect other patients.
7. **Don't return to work, school, or other activities.** Plan to take a break from your everyday activities until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. When you do return to activities, continue to wash your hands, and cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze.
8. **Keep your surroundings clean!** This is especially important if you are caring for someone sick, either yourself or another person at your home. Clean and disinfect all surfaces and objects that may have come into contact with germs. This will likely include kitchen counters, tables, children's toys, and bathroom surfaces. It is especially important to keep these things clean if you have others at home who are not sick. To clean these surfaces, wipe them down with an approved household cleaner and disinfectant.
9. **Clean household linens and utensils.** If someone in your home is or has been sick, clean their used linens, eating utensils, and dishes thoroughly before reusing them. These do not need to be washed separately from other used items. Just wash linens such as bed sheets and towels with your normal laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Dishes can be cleaned as usual.
10. **Avoid sharing.** Sharing is not caring when it comes to glassware, silverware, or other personal items. Don't share these things with people in your household or friends, even if they are not noticeably sick.

Other resources that may be helpful:

Source 1: The CDC's page on Ebola with information about how the disease is spread, its symptoms and prevention. www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html

Source 2: An article from *The Washington Post* with tips on how to talk to children about Ebola. www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2014/10/07/5-tips-for-talking-to-your-kids-about-ebola/?tid=recommended_strip_1