

FACTSHEET

MARBURG VIRUS DISEASE

Key aspects briefly summarized

- Marburg virus disease is a rare but severe hemorrhagic fever.
- The disease spreads through contact with infected animals or people.
- Symptoms can be similar to other tropical diseases
- There is no licensed treatment or vaccine for Marburg disease, and
- Prevention measures are important to follow, see below.



Disease

Marburg virus disease (MVD) is a rare but severe hemorrhagic fever, caused by Marburg virus (MARV). Although MVD is uncommon, it has the potential to cause epidemics with significant case fatality rates (50 to 88%).

Occurrence / Risk areas

All recorded MVD outbreaks have originated in Africa. Fruit bats are the natural reservoirs for Marburg virus. Caves or mines colonized with bats are an important source of infection.

Transmission

The majority of MVD outbreaks have been connected to human entry into bat-infested mines and caves. Transmission occurs by direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with blood, secretions, and body fluids of an infected animal or human or by indirect contact with contaminated surfaces and materials like clothing, bedding and medical equipment (for instance in healthcare settings). MVD is not an airborne disease, and a person is not contagious before symptoms appear. As a result, if proper infection prevention and control precautions are strictly followed, the risk of infection is regarded as minimal.

Symptoms

The incubation period (time between infection and onset of symptoms) ranges from a 2 to 21 days (usually 5 to 10 days). The onset of MVD is usually abrupt, with initially non-specific, flu-like symptoms such as a high fever, severe headache, chills and malaise. Rapid worsening occurs within 2–5 days for more than half of patients, marked by gastrointestinal symptoms such as anorexia, abdominal discomfort, severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. As the disease advances, clinical manifestations can become more severe and include liver failure, delirium, shock, bleeding (hemorrhaging), multi-organ dysfunction and death.

In case of symptoms

If think that you have had an exposure at risk and develop fever with nonspecific symptoms such as chills, headache, muscle pain, malaise or abdominal pain:

- you should separate yourself from others (isolate) **immediately** and
- **immediately** seek medical advice by contacting the in-country hotline by phone or contact a tropical institute or university hospital infectious disease unit.
- alert the healthcare providers of your recent travel to an area with a Marburg outbreak.

Treatment

Currently, there are no licensed treatments for Marburg disease. Treatment is limited to supportive care (rest, hydration, managing oxygen status and blood pressure, treatment of secondary infections). Without supportive care, high proportion of infected people die.

Prevention

The risk for travellers is very low if the below precautions are followed, but it is high for family members and caregivers who have contact with sick people.

General precautions during travel to affected areas:

- Wash your hands regularly and carefully using soap and water (or alcohol gel if soap is unavailable).
- Avoid contact with sick people who have symptoms, such as fever, muscle pain, and rash.
- Avoid contact with blood and other body fluids
- Avoid visiting healthcare facilities in the MVD-affected areas for nonurgent medical care or non-medical reasons.
- Avoid contact with dead bodies or items that have been in contact with dead bodies, participating in funeral or burial rituals, or attending a funeral or burial.
- Avoid handling, cooking, or eating bush/wild meat (meat of wild/feral mammals killed for food).

No guarantee can be given for the accuracy and completeness of the medical information, nor can any liability be accepted for any damage that may occur.

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- Wash and peel fruit and vegetables before consumption.
- Avoid visiting mines or bat caves and contact with all wild animals; alive or dead, particularly bats.
- If you decide to visit mines or caves inhabited by fruit bat colonies, wear gloves and other appropriate protective clothing, including masks and eye protection.
- Practice safer sex.

Further Information

- Swiss Federal Office of Public Health: [LINK](#)
- European Center for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC): [Marburg virus disease](#)
- US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [About Marburg Disease](#)
- World Health Organization: [Marburg Virus Disease](#)