

Box 1 Key public health actions for early detection and prevention of transmission of Ebola virus [Source: (14)]

Leadership and coordination

- Set up an intersectoral coordination mechanism for information sharing, periodic risk assessment and managing the national and international operational response should cases occur.
- Provide regular advice to travellers going to Ebola-affected countries on effective public health measures for limiting exposure.

Screening at points of entry as required under the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005)

- Increase awareness of points of entry officials on the risk of importation of Ebola virus disease (EVD) case.
- Reinforce the team managing the screening of passengers arriving at the points of entry by deploying additional human resources.
- Ensure that the points of entry officials are appropriately trained for assessment, screening and detection of any suspected case with EVD.
- Ensure availability of measures for isolation of suspected case (possibly in a separate isolation/quarantine space) for investigation and management.
- Ensure there is effective coordination for information sharing and reporting between the designated points of entry officials and the Ministry of Health.

Enhancing surveillance for contact tracing and monitoring

- Enhance surveillance for clusters of unexplained deaths or febrile illness in countries with links to ground border crossing.
- Disseminate case definition of EVD to all health care facilities.
- Develop a protocol for active surveillance, contact tracing and monitoring of close contacts of any suspected case detected or identified either at the points of entry or through the nation's disease surveillance system.
- Ensure that the relevant staff are trained on field epidemiology, investigation and data management.

Reinforcing infection control precautions in health-care settings

- Identify, designate and establish (where necessary) appropriate isolation units for patient care.
- Ensure availability of sufficient quantities of personal protective equipment (PPEs) and other disinfectant materials at point of care.
- Ensure that the health-care workers are appropriately trained on the use, especially on properly putting on and removing PPEs and other barrier nursing practices for care of EVD patient in health care facilities.

Improving access to quality diagnostics testing and rapid turnaround of results

- Train staff on collection, storage and transportation of samples from suspected cases and deactivation of specimens ensuring appropriate biosecurity measures.
- Establish a process for rapid shipment of specimens to a WHO reference laboratory.
- Ensure capacity to perform routine diagnostic testing.

Improving social mobilization and risk communication for Ebola

- Provide essential information on EVD to general and at-risk populations (health-care workers, for example).
- Advise identified target audiences (health-care workers and family members) on what can be done to prevent the virus from spreading.
- Develop key messages on preparedness and modify as the situation evolves
- Develop communications products for various target groups.
- Ensure capacity to perform social mobilization and risk communication if and when an outbreak occurs.