



Ebola SMS Course for Health Workers¹

The current Ebola epidemic in West Africa is the first Ebola epidemic in region and therefore most health workers have received no formal education on Ebola prevention, diagnosis, or care. During an epidemic, health workers are needed at their posts and there is often not time to bring them to central sites for face to face training. In addition, travel for training risks spreading the disease via health workers who are not aware they are infected. Traditional distance education approaches, such as the internet and DVD are difficult because many community-based health workers often do not have access to the internet or laptops and tablets. In order to address these issues and get information quickly to health workers in Ebola-affected and at-risk countries, IntraHealth International has developed an Ebola SMS course. These messages were developed based on the US CDC's Ebola Guidelines for Health Workers². The course is available for general use and modification under a creative commons license. We recommend that the course be adapted to meet national guidelines and language.

The course presented below is a series of SMS message (140 characters or less) to be sent over a period of a week or two to health workers. SMSs can be sent out to health workers' mobile phone numbers via systems such as RapidSMS³ using an iHRIS⁴ HR database or another compatible system. This course can be offered as a stand-alone course or in conjunction with Ebola courses in other modalities such as face to face, print, or interactive voice response. The SMS course can also be repeated over time to serve as reminders for health workers after their initial Ebola training is complete. Due to the emergency nature of the situation, the content has been condensed down to the most actionable interventions that will save lives and build trust. We also recommend the establishment of Ebola Information Hotlines for health workers as mentioned in the last text in the course.

Ebola SMS Course Texts

1. Over the next few days you will receive texts from the Ministry of Health regarding Ebola prevention, diagnosis, care, and communication.
2. Ebola Virus Disease (Ebola) is caused by the Ebola virus and not transmitted through water or food or other means.

¹Contact Dr. Kate Tulenko for further information. (ktulenko@intrahealth.org). Ebola SMS message course for community members will shortly be available.

²<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp>

³<https://www.rapidsms.org/>

⁴<http://www.ihris.org/> iHRIS is currently being used by 19 countries to manage over 1 million health worker HR records.

3. Symptoms of Ebola include fever >38.6 & other symptoms including vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained bleeding, muscle pain & headache
4. Ebola is transmitted via body fluids (blood, saliva, sweat, urine, stool, vomit, semen and breast milk) of people infected with the Ebola virus.
5. Ebola is transmitted when infected body fluids come in contact with mucosa (lips, nose, eyes) or broken skin of a healthy person.
6. The Ebola virus comes from fruit bats and other bush meat. Advise communities to NOT touch or eat bats or other bush meat.
7. Ebola is NOT transmitted by respiratory droplets, food, water, or just being in the same room with someone with Ebola.
8. The Ebola virus is easily killed on surfaces with 0.5% chlorine bleach solution.
9. Ebola symptoms can appear up to 21 days after exposure & normally appear within 2 to 10 days.
10. Healthy people with known Ebola exposure should be monitored for 21 days from their last known exposure.
11. Sick adults & children with known Ebola exposure are presumed to have Ebola & should be admitted to isolation wards & their contacts traced
12. Health workers can protect themselves from Ebola by wearing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE): gloves, gowns, goggles, masks, boots
13. Personal Protective Equipment should be put on in this order: gown, mask, goggles, and gloves.
14. Always use great care when removing PPE so you don't touch the dirty surfaces and infect yourself.
15. Remove PPE in this order and dispose in biohazard bin: gloves, goggles, gown, & mask
16. Health workers who receive a sharps injury while caring for Ebola patients should wash the area immediately with soap & report incident.
17. The best care for patients with Ebola is fluid & electrolyte replacement, blood pressure support, nutrition, comfort care, & oxygen if needed
18. Ebola survival rate is about 50% with better rates for those who get early care.
19. There is no tested, widely available treatment or vaccine for Ebola, although some are being developed.
20. Let communities know they should stop traditional practices of people touching the bodies of dead family members.
21. Let communities know that their members with Ebola are much more likely to live if they are cared for in a hospital than at home.
22. Let family members see the dead bodies of their relatives who died from Ebola, ask questions, and watch the burial.
23. This ends the series of Ebola texts from the Ministry of Health. If you have more questions please call the Ebola hotline (XXX)XXX-XXX