

Ebola Information for Parents and Guardians

November 18, 2014

Reduce fears. There has been a lot of news coverage about the spread of Ebola. When children and youth hear about disease outbreaks on the news or on social media, they can feel scared, confused or anxious, just like adults. During these events, it may be a good time to limit your child's exposure to TV news reports and monitor your child's use of social media and the internet. You can decide what information they need to know based on their level of understanding. Be careful when talking about Ebola where children can overhear. If they do ask questions or have concerns, listen. Assure them they are safe. We have health systems that are prepared to take care of sick people. Ebola is rare and only exists in a few specific places. It's important for parents and guardians to have accurate information. Visit healthoregon.org/ebola or call 211 to get the facts about Ebola.

Keep your family healthy. Your family is at greater risk from the seasonal flu than from the Ebola virus. Unless you or your child have had direct contact with someone who is sick with Ebola or have recently traveled to an [affected area](#), you are not at risk. There are some steps you can take at home that will reduce the spread of many illnesses, including the flu or colds. Make sure everyone washes their hands often with soap and water. Cough or sneeze in a tissue or on your sleeve. Don't share cups, eating utensils or toothbrushes. Visit flu.oregon.gov to find out where you can get a flu shot.

Reduce social stigma and prevent bullying. This can happen when people link a disease with a certain group of people, though everyone in that group is not at risk for the disease. In the case of Ebola, children and families aren't a threat if they have connections to Africa. Ebola is caused by a virus, not a person or group. Only people showing [symptoms of Ebola](#) can transmit the Ebola virus. Encourage children to show consideration and respect at all times to all classmates and friends. If they know someone at school with ties to West Africa, they should not shun, tease or bully, and there is no need to avoid them. You can make this an opportunity for children to learn. Look at a map of Africa and locate the affected West African countries. Don't stop there. Take the time to learn more about this expansive, diverse continent.

If you are worried. As a parent or guardian of children, you may feel stressed or worried about Ebola, especially if there are cases in your community or in other parts of the country where loved ones live. You can call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 to speak to someone immediately and confidentially. The website is disasterdistress.samhsa.gov. You can also contact the Oregon Health Authority if you have questions about ebola at ebola.oregon@state.or.us.

More Information on Ebola

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/ebola
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohsepr/resource/how-do-i-talk-to-my-child-about-ebola>