

**What to know before you go:****What is Lassa fever?**

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness that typically occurs in West Africa.

In severe cases, Ribavirin, an antiviral drug, can be an effective treatment if given early.

**There is currently no vaccine** that protects against Lassa fever.

**How is Lassa fever spread?**

The Lassa virus is transmitted to humans mainly through handling of rats, food, or household items contaminated by rat's urine and faeces.

The virus can spread between people through direct contact with the body fluids of a person infected with Lassa fever or contaminated bedding and clothing. You cannot get Lassa fever through hugging, shaking hands or sitting near someone.

**What are the symptoms of Lassa fever?**

Symptoms of Lassa fever typically occur 5-21 days after coming into contact with the virus.

Many people who are infected do not show symptoms.

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Chest and muscle pain
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Facial swelling
- In severe cases, bleeding from the mouth, nose, vagina or gastrointestinal tract

**What to know during duty travel:****How can I prevent from getting infected with Lassa fever?**

Prevention relies on promoting good "community hygiene" to discourage rodents from entering homes.

- Storing grain and other foodstuffs in rodent-proof containers, disposing of garbage far from the home, maintaining clean households
  - Avoid contact with infected rats and consumption of their raw meat. Rats should be handled with gloves and other appropriate protective clothing
  - All animal products should be thoroughly cooked
  - Hand hygiene
- Precautions in health care settings:**
- Implement Standard Precautions with all patients – regardless of their diagnosis – in all work practices at all times including safe injection practices.
  - Health care workers treating patient with Lassa fever should apply extra infection control measures to prevent contact with the patient's blood and body fluids and contaminated surfaces or materials such as clothing and bedding.
  - Laboratory workers are also at risk. Samples taken from suspected human Lassa fever cases for diagnosis should be handled by trained staff and processed in suitably equipped laboratories.


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## What to know during duty travel:

### What do I do if I think I have Lassa fever?

1. Avoid contact with other people
2. Seek health advice immediately from the UN Physician or individual in charge of occupational health in the field
3. Drink plenty of fluids

## What to know after duty travel:

Medical follow up is strongly recommended if you have had symptoms during your mission or within 21 days after returning. Staff and non-staff must call the emergency number of the country highlighting their recent travel to an area with Lassa fever and report to UN medical services and/or local health care provider



## For more information:



**WHO factsheet:** <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs179/en/>

**WHO standard precautions in health care:** <http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/standardprecautions/en/index.html>

**WHO infection prevention and control guidance for care of patients in health care settings, with focus on Ebola:** [http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus\\_infection\\_control/en/?ua=1](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/?ua=1)

**UN medical services around the globe:** <https://hr.un.org/page/medical-services-around-globe>

**CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/lassa/index.html>

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