

Obama addresses West Africans on facts about Ebola

September 2 2014, by Darlene Superville



This Aug. 18, 2014 file photo shows a health worker carrying gloves at an Ebola treatment center in the city of Monrovia, Liberia. President Barack Obama urged West Africans on Tuesday to wear gloves and masks when caring for Ebola patients or burying anyone who died of the disease. He also discouraged the traditional burial practice of directly touching the body of someone who died of Ebola, which is one way the disease has been spreading in the region. (AP

Photo/Abbas Dulleh, File)

President Barack Obama urged West Africans on Tuesday to wear gloves and masks when caring for Ebola patients or burying anyone who died of the disease. He also discouraged the traditional burial practice of directly touching the body of someone who died of Ebola, which is one way the disease has been spreading in the region.

"You can respect your traditions and honor your loved ones without risking the lives of the living," Obama said in a brief video message to residents of hard-hit Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria. The video was posted on the White House website. "Stopping this disease won't be easy but we know how to do it."

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has killed more than 1,500 people in the four countries.

In the video, Obama said the first step to slowing the disease is to know the facts, and then delivered a tutorial on how Ebola is and isn't spread.

Obama said the disease isn't spread through the air, like the flu, or through such casual contact as sitting next to someone on a bus. People also cannot get Ebola from another person until that individual shows symptoms of the disease, like fever, he said.

Obama said the most common method of infection is from touching the body fluids—sweat, saliva or blood—of someone who is ill or has died of the disease. Contact with a contaminated item, such as a needle, is another common infection method, he said.

He said anyone who feels sick should get help immediately, saying

nearly half of patients can recover provided they seek prompt medical treatment.

Obama also was briefed Tuesday on the Ebola crisis by Tom Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Frieden recently returned from a visit to West Africa.

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Citation: Obama addresses West Africans on facts about Ebola (2014, September 2) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-obama-west-africans-facts-ebola.html>

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