

Personal protective equipment for use in a filovirus disease outbreak

Rapid advice guideline



**World Health
Organization**

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Foreword

Health workers are among the first to respond when an infectious pathogen threatens a community. Indeed, they are often among the first to be affected -- a cluster of cases of severe illness in health care workers can be the first sign that something unusual is going on. Before the cause of an outbreak has been identified and before infection-control measures have been put in place, health workers can find themselves at heightened risk of infection. This was the case in 2014, when the Ebola epidemic began in West Africa. Many doctors, nurses and other health workers became infected in the workplace and died.

Responding to an urgent request from Member States, the World Health Organization (WHO) undertook the development of a rapid advice guideline on Personal Protective Equipment, an important component of Infection Prevention and Control.

The publication in October 2014 of the guideline summary marked the first time that WHO implemented a new, state-of-the-art approach to the development of evidence-informed, rapid advice guidelines. It was also the first time that a rapid advice guideline included technical specifications.

Based on this and other experiences over the past two years, WHO is putting in place processes, procedures and methods for developing guidelines in response to public health emergencies, addressing the need for timely guidance containing valid, feasible recommendations, often in the context of sparse data and challenging field conditions.

In many countries, the health system depends heavily on just a few health workers. This human resource is precious. Infection, and worse, death, of just a few can drastically reduce a health system's capacity to deliver basic care. Thus, any effort that protects a country's health workers also protects its health system and its long term investment in health.

Maximizing health gains while minimizing the risk for health workers and their families equates to health protection of the larger community as well.

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