


**Ebola, COVID, Measles –  
What's Next?**

How to Prepare for the Next Emerging Pathogen

Denver Health and Hospital Authority  
High-Risk Infection Team

April 22-23, 2026

Courtney Baker, BSN, RN  
Clayton Robertson, BSN, RN  
Jacob Wiersch, MHA



## Disclosures



- Presenters have no conflicts of interest to disclose
- The Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Center (RESPTC) Program at Denver Health is funded by US Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response Grant U3REP220684



## Objectives



- By the end of this session, participants will be able to...
  1. **define** what constitutes a special pathogen and describe how our understanding of special pathogens has evolved over time.
  2. **articulate** the threat that special pathogens pose to the US healthcare system and list key steps that healthcare facilities can take to protect themselves from the most serious impacts of special pathogen events.
  3. **describe** the role of NETEC and the RESPTCs in supporting special pathogen preparedness and will be able to identify key information and resource repositories to support their own preparedness efforts.



## Agenda



- Special Pathogens Foundations
- Current and Recent Outbreaks of Concern
- Prevention and Response
- National and Regional Systems of Care
- Opportunities, Resources, and Next Steps





# Prevention and Response



## Joint Commission Elements of Performance



### Identify

- Screening at points of entry (POE)
- Emergency Departments, Urgent care clinics
- Must include respiratory s/s, fever rash, and travel history



### Isolate

- Procedures for transmission-based precautions
- PPE and don/doff techniques
- Safe space, equipped to support person under investigation of HCID



### Inform

- Procedures for informing key hospital staff
- Public health notifications / processes



### Infection Control Procedures

- Reduce exposure to staff, patients, visitors using hierarchy of controls
- Support care staff while in isolation
- Waste management, cleaning/disinfecting care spaces, equipment and surfaces



### Education & Training

- Develop and implement education and training
- Assess competencies for staff who will implement protocols for HCID's

# Identify, Isolate, and Inform

## Identify, Isolate, Inform Tip Sheet



Identify, Isolate, Inform is a simple, 3-step approach to manage special pathogens cases effectively. This tool may serve as a reference and may be customized to support operations at your facility.



## Identify, Isolate, Inform

### IDENTIFY

- Identify all points of entry at your facility.
- Post signage at points of entry that promote patients to self-report symptoms and travel or exposure history.
- Screen all patients and ask about signs and symptoms (S+S) that might indicate infection: fever, headache, body aches, etc.
- If screened positive (S+S), ask the patient to don a mask.
- Then, ask the patient about travel/exposure history.



## Identify, Isolate, Inform



### ISOLATE

- Place the patient in an AIIR room. If AIIR is unavailable, place the patient in a private room or area.
- Limit contact with other patients, visitors, and healthcare workers.
- Don appropriate transmission-based PPE before entering the patient room.



## Identify, Isolate, Inform



### INFORM

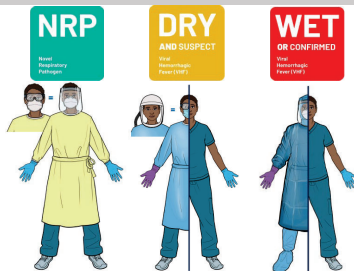
- Keep the patient informed about their care. Acknowledge their questions or concerns.
- Inform appropriate leadership in the department and facility.
- Notify the provider and work with Infection Prevention to determine the next steps, including if the patient meets case criteria and notification of public health.



## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



1. Identify what PPE you are going to use based on the pathogen and staff familiarity
2. Develop a step-by-step processes for putting on and taking off your PPE ensemble
3. Have a trained observer integrated within your processes



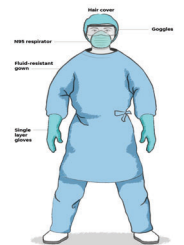
Images source: [Know Your PPE - NETEC Resource Library](#)



## VHF PPE

Vs.

## Respiratory PPE



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, North Shreveport, Louisiana Medical Center



## Planning, Training, and Exercise



1. Planning
  - Identify PPE, room/area for patient care, specimen processes
2. Training
  - Based on your policies and procedures
    - Once a year
3. Exercise
  - Start small- test your Identify, Isolate, and Inform processes
  - Build upon your exercise of I,I,I



## Knowledge and Skills



- Skills:
  - Implement donning and doffing competencies at least once a year focused on HCIDs
  - Drill any other competencies based on your protocols
    - Examples: Patient hand off, patient transportation through healthcare setting, lab draws, communication processes, waste management
  - Document individual competencies check off/sign off



## National & Regional System of Care

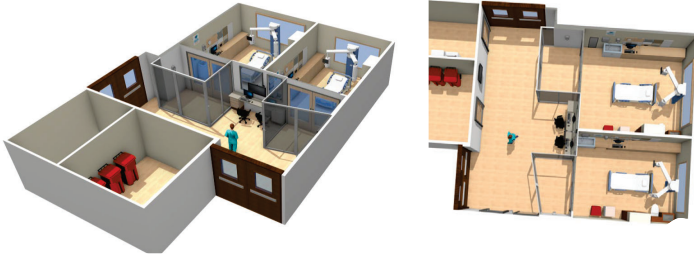


## Region 8 RESPTC – Denver Health

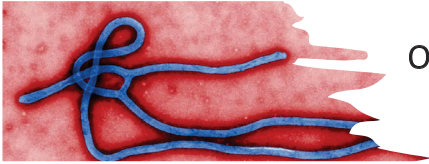


- One of 13 Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers in the US
  - Training and education
  - Technical assistance support
  - Definitive care site for SP patients
- Offer services/collaborate across R8:
  - Colorado
  - Montana
  - North Dakota
  - South Dakota
  - Utah
  - Wyoming





## Our Team and Unit



## NSPS Mission, Vision, & Goals



### Mission

To develop a coordinated network of high-quality special pathogen care dedicated to protecting patients, communities, and the health care workforce in the United States.

### Vision

To save lives and protect the health care workforce through an agile and comprehensive special pathogen system of care.

### ASPIRATIONAL GOALS



**Zero**

**Preventable Deaths**

after special pathogen infection



**2 hours**

**Network Mobilization**

after suspected special pathogen infection

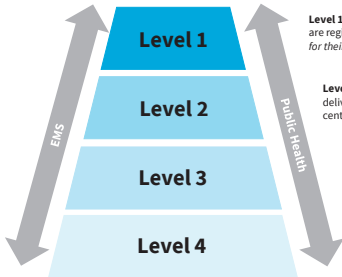


**100%**

**Have Access**

to high-quality special pathogen care for all of the U.S. population

## The Tiered System of Care



**Level 1 facilities, or Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (RESPTCs),** are regional resources hubs which provide highly specialized care. *Level 1s care for patients for their duration of illness.*

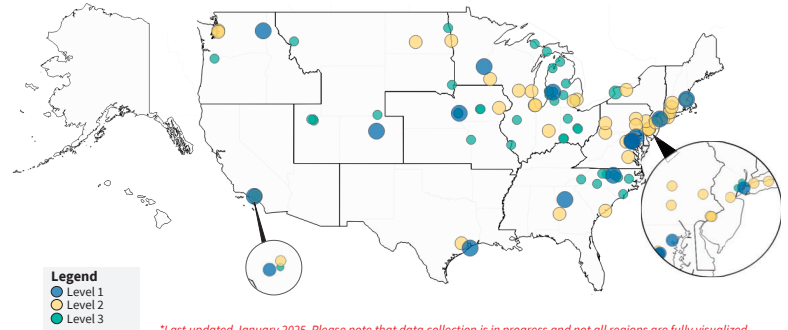
**Level 2 facilities, or Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (SPTCs),** have the capacity to deliver specialized care to clusters of patients and serve as primary patient care delivery centers. *Level 2s can care for patients for their duration of illness.*

**Level 3 facilities, or Assessment Centers,** are widely accessible care delivery facilities, able to conduct limited basic laboratory testing, stabilize patients, and coordinate rapid patient transfer. *Level 3s can care for patients for 12-36 hours.*

**Level 4 facilities, or All Other Healthcare Facilities,** can identify, isolate, inform, & initiate stabilizing medical care; protect staff; and arrange timely patient transport to minimize impact to normal facility operations.

*Additional partners, such as EMS and public health, are essential for the coordination of the System*

## System of Care Current State Map\*



*\*Last updated January 2025. Please note that data collection is in progress and not all regions are fully visualized*

## North Dakota State Processes



What to do if you come across a possible special pathogen case in your area?

### Remember!

#### Identify, Isolate, Inform

All special pathogens are immediately reportable.

#### ND HHS contact info

Disease control: 701-328-2378; 701-220-0819 (on-call)

HAI/AR: 701-328-8660; [hhsicar@nd.gov](mailto:hhsicar@nd.gov)

EPR Department Operations Center: 701-328-0707



## Opportunities to Get Involved



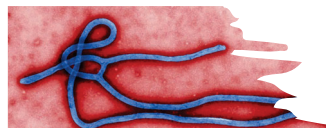
- Complete the [NETEC VHF Preparedness Checklist](#)
  - Helps advance your preparedness and lets NETEC and the RESPTC know that you're interested in future updates or opportunities
- Sign up for communications from the RESPTC about outbreak updates and educational offerings
  - Biweekly Disaster Health education series offered through iECHO – includes CEs
  - Reach out to [HITeam@dhha.org](mailto:HITeam@dhha.org)
- Review your internal plans, set up a training, and conduct an exercise
  - Reach out to the RESPTC, NETEC, or ND HHS for support



## Resources



- [Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Center | Denver Health](#)
- [National Emerging Special Pathogens Training & Education Center](#)
- [About Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers | Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers \(VHFs\) | CDC](#)
- [ND Health and Human Services | Health and Human Services North Dakota](#)
- [Identify, Isolate, Inform Tip Sheet - NETEC Resource Library](#)
- [Know Your PPE - NETEC Resource Library](#)
- [EMS Procedural Guidelines for Special Pathogens | NETEC](#)
- [NETEC Courses](#)



Thank you!

Questions? Reach out to [HITeam@dhha.org](mailto:HITeam@dhha.org)

