

23 Isolating sick people

OVERVIEW



With some diseases, it is necessary to isolate people who are sick to prevent them from passing the infection to others.

Isolating patients is not imprisonment; it is not done forcibly and should be carried out with their consent. You need to explain to patients and their families why isolation is necessary.

What you need to KNOW

- ➔ In Ebola and Marburg epidemics and an influenza pandemic, it may be very necessary to keep sick people away from others to limit the spread of the disease.
- ➔ This means that one person, who must have all the necessary protection, should take care of the patient to reduce the chances of infecting others. This is called “barrier nursing”.
- ➔ This person will provide care, food and water and communicate with the patient.



Volunteers should talk to the family and the sick person to explain why isolation will help to prevent the disease spreading

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What volunteers can DO

- If it is decided that isolation and barrier nursing are necessary, your role as a volunteer will start with surveillance and actively looking for cases of the disease (see *Action tool 30*).
- If a case is found, the need for isolation should be explained to the patient and his/her family. This IS NOT DONE FORCIBLY and the wishes of the family should be respected. However, if you explain to them that such isolation is to protect others, including members of the family, it may be easier for them and for the patient to understand why isolation is being proposed.
- The person identified to care for the patient should be shown how to support the patient and how to protect themselves and be provided with proper protection equipment.
- Provide psychosocial support to the family (see *Action tool 34*). Isolation of a loved one can be very hard, not only for the patient but also for the family.
- Try to avoid isolation becoming a reason for stigma and the social rejection of the patient and his/her family by explaining to the community why it is being done and seeking the help of elders and community leaders in fighting any stigma.



Talk to the community and elders to prevent stigma and social rejection