



20. Isolating sick people

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Overview

- Some diseases are so dangerous or infectious that it is necessary to isolate people who are sick in order to prevent them from passing the infection to others. Isolation means separating those who are sick from those who are healthy.
- 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 cases of Ebola, Marburg fever, Lassa fever, plague, monkeypox and MERS, it may be necessary to keep sick people away from others to limit the spread of the disease.
- In such cases, one person (who must be protected appropriately) takes care of the patient, in order to reduce the chances of infection. This is called “barrier nursing”.
- This person provides care, food and water, and communicates with the patient.

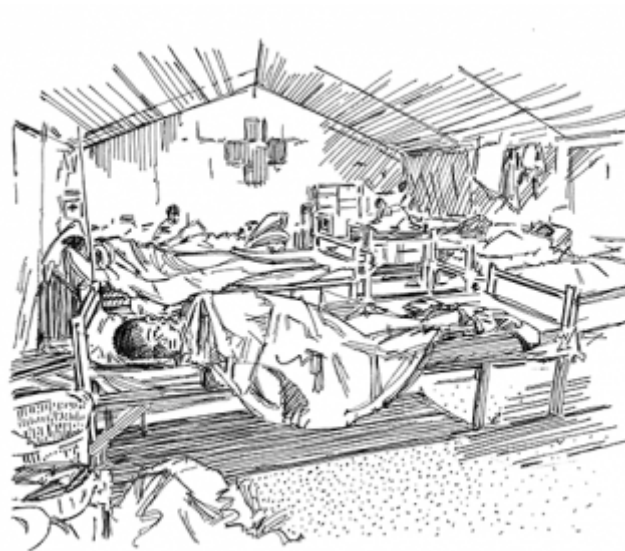
What you can do

- If it is decided that isolation and barrier nursing are necessary, you will continue active surveillance as a volunteer, looking for cases of the disease (see Action tool [Community-based surveillance](#)).
- When cases are found, the need for isolation should be explained to those who are ill and their families. This is not done forcibly and the wishes of the family should be respected. If you explain that isolation protects others, including members of the patient’s family, it may be easier for both the patient and his or her family to understand why isolation is being proposed.
- Those who care for a patient in isolation should be shown how to assist him or her and how to protect themselves. They should be provided with proper protective equipment.
- Provide psychosocial support to families (see Action tool [Psychosocial support](#)). Isolation of a loved one can be very hard, for the family as well as the patient.
- Try to stop isolation from causing stigma or social rejection of patients and their families. Explain to the community why isolation is necessary. Seek the help of elders and community leaders to fight stigma.
- Make sure that people in isolation have adequate food, water, and health care, as well as help to cope with any loss of livelihood.



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

Community messages



24. Finding sick people