

Beware fake ebola treatments on the internet, FDA says

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There are no approved treatments or preventive drugs against the deadly virus.

(HealthDay)— As the death toll in the West Africa Ebola outbreak passes 1,000, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is warning against products sold online that claim to treat the deadly disease or prevent infection.

Since the start of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the FDA has received a number of consumer complaints about bogus products, the agency said in a statement released Thursday.

However, "there are no approved vaccines, drugs, or investigational products specifically for Ebola available for purchase on the Internet," the FDA said.

"Individuals promoting these unapproved and fraudulent products must take immediate action to correct or remove these claims or face potential FDA action," the agency added.

It is also against the law for makers of dietary supplements to claim that their products prevent or cure disease, the FDA said.

Some experimental Ebola vaccines and treatments are being developed, but they are still in the early stages and have not undergone thorough testing for safety and effectiveness.

Most are also in extremely limited supply, the FDA said. Two U.S. Ebola patients, Dr. Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol, are slowly recovering after receiving doses of one experimental medicine called Zmapp. Only a handful of doses of the drug have been manufactured so far, and prior to the patients receiving it Zmapp had only been tested in animals.

The FDA also stressed that, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ebola does not pose a significant threat to the U.S. public.

The virus is not a water-borne or food-borne illness and is not transmitted through the air, the FDA said. Ebola is only spread through direct contact with the body fluids of an infected person, or through needles and other items that have been contaminated with the virus.

According to the World Health Organization, the current outbreak of Ebola has killed 1,066 people in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leona, and sickened 2,000 more.

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