



SARS



What is SARS?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory illness. The main way SARS appears to spread is through respiratory secretions called “droplets”.

How is SARS spread?

SARS is spread by close person to person contact. The SARS virus may be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus also can spread when an infected person touches an object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.

What is the risk of SARS in the U.S.?

All of the cases of SARS in the U.S. were in people who traveled to other parts of the world that had the SARS virus. Getting SARS is limited to people who are in areas where the SARS virus is present. No U.S. areas have been identified as having the SARS virus.

What does close contact mean?

Close contact is defined as having cared for or lived with a person known to have SARS or having direct contact with respiratory secretions and/or body fluids of a SARS patient. Examples include kissing or embracing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, close conversation (within 3 feet), and any other direct physical contact between people.

How long is a person with SARS contagious?

A person with SARS is most likely to be contagious only when they have symptoms, such as fever or cough. Patients are most contagious during the second week of illness. However, as a precaution against spreading the disease, the CDC recommends that persons with SARS limit their interactions outside the home (for example, not going to work or to school) until 10 days after their fevers have gone away and their respiratory (breathing) symptoms have gotten better.

What if I must travel to a country where SARS cases have been reported? What precautions can I take?

As with all infectious illnesses, the first line of defense is careful and frequent hand washing. It is a good practice to clean your hands often using either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Guidance for persons traveling to areas where SARS cases have been reported is provided at

<https://www.cdc.gov/sars/travel/index.html>

Symptoms of SARS:

- High fever (greater than 100.4°F/38°C)
- Cough
- Headache
- An overall feeling of discomfort
- Body aches
- Diarrhea
- Some people also have mild respiratory symptoms at the outset

A dry cough may develop in 2 to 7 days in SARS patients.

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CDC Public Information

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