



SARS: SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

What is SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)?

SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) is a respiratory (breathing) illness caused by a virus. The virus causes a mild to severe inflammation of the lungs (pneumonia).

How is SARS spread?

SARS spreads by close person-to-person contact (within three feet). Most people with SARS cared for, or lived with, another person with SARS. The illness spreads by direct contacting respiratory or other body secretions from a SARS-infected person. It is also possible that SARS can be spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently unknown. SARS can be spread when the infected person coughs or sneezes and another person inhales the infectious droplets released from the infected person's mouth or nose. Touching contaminated surfaces or objects can also spread the virus. If a person touches the skin of an infected person or touches contaminated objects and then touches their own eyes, nose, or mouth, that person could become infected. Good hand washing helps limit the spread of SARS.

Unless you contacted someone with SARS, or traveled to an area with SARS cases, you are probably not at risk.

How long would it take a person exposed to SARS to become sick?

A person exposed to SARS can develop symptoms up to 10 days after being exposed.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

SARS usually begins with a fever greater than 100.4°F. Other symptoms are chills, headache, body aches, dry cough or difficulty breathing. A small percentage of patients may need to be hospitalized, and some of them may need to be placed on breathing machines.

Who is at risk for SARS?

Most of the SARS cases in the United States occurred among travelers who visited other parts of the world affected by SARS.

What is the medical treatment for patients with SARS?

Treatment currently consists of treating symptoms and any underlying infections.

What should residents of the United States do if they recently traveled to a foreign country where cases of SARS were reported?

Individuals who recently traveled to a country with reported SARS cases should monitor their health for 10 days upon return. If they develop a fever of more than 100.4°F, and if they begin coughing or having difficulty breathing, they should phone their doctors immediately. They should inform their doctors about any recent travel to areas where SARS cases were reported, and particularly whether they contacted anyone with SARS symptoms.

Will getting the Influenza vaccine protect a person from getting SARS?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does **not** recommend using the influenza vaccination to reduce the risk of contracting SARS, or an illness resembling SARS. Persons who receive the annual influenza vaccination can still become sick with SARS.