



SARS Fact Sheet

What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness that is caused by a virus. It has recently been reported in Asia, North America, and Europe.

Who can get SARS?

Anyone can get SARS. Most of the cases in North America have occurred in persons who have recently traveled to areas that are affected by SARS. There have been very few cases resulting from spread to close contacts such as family members and health care workers. There is no evidence that SARS is being spread widely in communities in the United States.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

SARS generally begins with a high fever, usually greater than 100.4 degrees F. Other symptoms may include headache, body aches, an overall feeling of discomfort, and mild respiratory symptoms. After 2 to 7 days, persons infected with SARS may develop a dry cough that usually develops into pneumonia. About 10 percent of infected persons may have diarrhea.

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How is SARS spread?

SARS is spread from person to person by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the droplets are deposited on the mucous membranes (mouth, eyes, or nose) of nearby persons. The virus that causes SARS can also be spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye(s). It is also possible that the SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are not now known.

How long does it take for symptoms of SARS to develop?

The time between exposure to the SARS virus and onset of symptoms (the incubation period) is typically 2 to 7 days, but may take as long as 10 days.

What causes SARS?

SARS is caused by a previously unrecognized virus called the SARS-associated coronavirus.

How long can a person with SARS spread the disease?

Persons with SARS are most likely to be infectious only when they have symptoms, such as fever or cough. Persons with SARS are most infectious during the second week of illness.

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What is the treatment for SARS?

Patients with SARS should receive the same treatment as would anyone with a community-acquired pneumonia. Various antiviral treatments are being tested.

How can the spread of SARS be prevented?

As a precaution against spreading the disease, CDC recommends that people with SARS limit their interactions outside the home until 10 days after their symptoms have gone away.

Can a person who has had SARS get it again?

No one knows yet for sure. CDC is investigating this important question.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health
Department (405) 425-4437*

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