FACT SHEET

Basic Information about SARS

A New Disease Called SARS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is investigating a new disease called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that has recently been reported in Asia, North America, and Europe. As of April 13, about 190 cases of SARS had been reported in the United States. This fact sheet provides basic information about the disease and what is being done to combat its spread.

Symptoms Of SARS

In general, SARS begins with a fever greater than 100.4°F [>38.0°C]. Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also experience mild respiratory symptoms. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough and have trouble breathing.

How Sars Spreads

The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Most cases of SARS have involved people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions) from a person who has SARS. Potential ways in which SARS can be spread include touching the skin of other people or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching your eye(s), nose, or mouth. This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets onto themselves, other people, or nearby surfaces. It also is possible that SARS can be spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently not known.

Who Is At Risk For SARS

Cases of SARS continue to be reported mainly among people who have had direct close contact with an infected person, such as those sharing a household with a SARS patient and health-care workers who did not use infection control procedures while taking care of a SARS patient. In the United States, there is no indication of community spread at this time. CDC continues to monitor this situation very closely.

Possible Cause Of SARS

Scientists at CDC and other laboratories have detected a previously unrecognized coronavirus in patients with SARS. The new coronavirus is the leading hypothesis for the cause of SARS, however, other viruses are still under investigation as potential causes.
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CDC RECOMMENDATIONS
CDC has issued recommendations and guidelines for people who may be affected by this outbreak.

For individuals considering travel to affected parts of Asia:
CDC advises that people planning elective or nonessential travel to mainland China and Hong Kong, Singapore, and Hanoi, Vietnam may wish to postpone their trips until further notice. Visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel_advice.htm for more information about CDC's advice to travelers.

For individuals who think they might have SARS:
People with symptoms of SARS (fever greater than 100.4°F [>38.0°C] accompanied by a cough and/or difficulty breathing) should consult a health-care provider. To help the health-care provider make a diagnosis, tell them about any recent travel to places where SARS has been reported or whether there was contact with someone who had these symptoms.

For family members caring for someone with SARS:
CDC has developed interim infection control recommendations available at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/ic-closecontacts.htm for patients with suspected SARS in the household. These basic precautions should be followed for 10 days after respiratory symptoms and fever are gone. During that time, SARS patients are asked to limit interactions outside the home (not go to work, school, or other public areas).

For health-care workers:
Transmission of SARS to health-care workers appears to have occurred after close contact with sick people before recommended infection control precautions were put into use. CDC has issued interim infection control recommendations for health-care settings (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/infectioncontrol.htm) as well as for the management of exposures to SARS in health-care and other institutional settings (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/exposureguidance.htm).

What CDC is doing About SARS
CDC is working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners in a global effort to address the SARS outbreak. For its part, CDC has taken the following actions:

- Activated its Emergency Operations Center to provide round-the-clock coordination and response.
- Committed more than 250 medical experts and support staff to work on the SARS response.
- Deployed medical officers, epidemiologists, and other specialists to assist with on-site investigations around the world.
- Provided ongoing assistance to state and local health departments in investigating possible cases of SARS in the United States.
- Conducted extensive laboratory testing of clinical specimens from SARS patients to identify the cause of the disease.
- Initiated a system for distributing health alert notices to travelers who may have been exposed to cases of SARS.

To find out more about SARS, go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars and www.who.int/csr/sars/en/ or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY).