
MERS-CoV

What You Need to Know



What is MERS?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory illness. MERS is caused by a coronavirus called "Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus" (MERS-CoV). MERS-CoV was first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia.

What are the symptoms of MERS?

Most people who are infected with MERS-CoV develop severe acute respiratory illness within 14 days of exposure. Symptoms may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and in some cases diarrhea. Some people were reported as having only a mild respiratory illness, but it has a range of severity that can include death.

How is MERS-CoV spread?

MERS-CoV can spread between people who are in close contact, such as caring for someone who is ill with MERS-CoV or a household contact. Transmission from infected people to healthcare personnel has occurred.

Has anyone in the United States gotten infected?

There has been a limited number of MERS cases confirmed in the United States from travelers returning to the U.S. from abroad.

Am I at risk for MERS-CoV infection?

There is a very low risk of MERS-CoV infection to the general public in the United States. You are not considered to be at risk if you have not had close contact with a person who is currently sick from MERS.

Can I still travel to countries where MERS cases have occurred?

It is not recommended that anyone change their travel plans because of MERS. Travelers who are going to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula are advised to follow standard precautions, such as hand washing and avoiding contact with people who are ill.

What if I recently traveled to countries in the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries and got sick?

If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after traveling from countries in the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries, stay home and call your healthcare provider and mention your recent travel and symptoms.

Is there a vaccine or treatments?

There is not a vaccine or specific treatments recommended for illnesses caused by MERS-CoV. Medical care helps relieve symptoms.

Is MERS-CoV the same as the SARS virus?

MERS-CoV is not the same coronavirus that caused severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003.

How can I help protect myself?

Follow these tips to help prevent respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs.



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