

# Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

### ***What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?***

*Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus, called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV). SARS was first reported in Asia in February 2003.*

### **How is it spread?**

The main way that SARS seems to spread is by close person-to-person contact. The virus that causes SARS is thought to be transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplet spread can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance (generally up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby.

The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye(s). In addition, it is possible that the SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air (airborne spread) or by other ways that are not now known.

### **How is it treated?**

CDC recommends that patients with SARS receive the same treatment that would be used for a patient with any serious community-acquired atypical pneumonia. SARS-CoV is being tested against various antiviral drugs to see if an effective treatment can be found.

### **How can we prevent the spread of SARS?**

If transmission of SARS-CoV recurs, there are some common-sense precautions that you can take that apply to many infectious diseases. The **most important is frequent hand washing with soap and water** or use of an alcohol-based hand rub. You should also avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands and encourage people around you to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

The incubation period for SARS is typically 2 to 7 days, although in some cases it may be as long as 10 days.

### **Symptoms**

- **High Fever > 100.4 °F**
- **Chills**
- **Headache**
- **Discomfort**
- **Body Aches**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Pneumonia**

After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry, nonproductive cough that might progress to a condition in which the oxygen levels in the blood are low (hypoxia). In 10 percent to 20 percent of cases, patients require mechanical ventilation.



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