

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Fact Sheet

Toledo-Lucas County Health Department | Emergency Preparedness



What is severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)?

Severe acute respirator 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. The illness spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe and Asia before the SARS global outbreak of 2003 was contained. Currently, there is no known SARS transmission anywhere in the world.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

In general, SARS begins with a high fever (temperature greater than 100.4°F). Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also have mild respiratory symptoms at the beginning. About 10 to 20% of patients have diarrhea. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough. Most patients develop pneumonia.

How does SARS 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 sneezes or coughs. Droplet spread can happen when droplets from a 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 nearby. The virus also can spread when a person touched a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye. In addition, it is possible that the SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are not known.

How is SARS diagnosed?

In the absence of person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV anywhere in the world, the diagnosis of SARS-CoV disease should be considered only in patients who require hospitalization for confirmed pneumonia and who have a history that raises the suspicion of SARS-CoV disease. The suspicion of SARS-CoV disease is raised if, within 10 days of symptoms onset, the patient:

- Has a history of recent travel to mainland China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan or close contact with ill persons with a history of recent travel to such areas, or



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- Is employed in an occupation at particular risk for SARS-CoV exposure, including healthcare worker with direct patient contact or a worker in a laboratory that contains live SARS-CoV, or
- Is part of a cluster of cases of atypical pneumonia without an alternative diagnosis

What is the treatment for SARS?

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 drugs to see if an effective treatment can be found.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
<https://www.cdc.gov/sars/index.html>

The Toledo-Lucas County Health Department is committed to providing relevant and timely information during a public health emergency.

For the latest information, please visit:
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