

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Fact Sheet

1. What is SARS?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness that has recently been reported in Asia, North America, and Europe. This fact sheet provides basic information about the disease. To find out more about SARS, go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/ and www.who.int/csr/sars/en/. The Web sites are updated daily.

2. How is SARS spread?

Primarily by close contact with a contaminated person or object containing infectious droplets.

3. What is close contact?

The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Close contact might occur when between people live together in the same household or if someone is providing care to a SARS patient. Examples include kissing or embracing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, close conversation (within 3 feet), physical examination, and any other direct physical contact between people. Close contact does not include activities such as walking by a person or sitting across a waiting room or office for a brief period of time.

4. What are the signs and symptoms of SARS?

Fever greater than 100.4° F, headache, and body aches. After 2 to 7 days, a person may develop mild respiratory symptoms i.e., a dry cough or trouble breathing.

5. Who is at risk for getting SARS?

Most of the U.S. cases of SARS have occurred among travelers returning to the United States from other parts of the world with SARS. There have been very few cases as a result of spread to close contacts such as family members and health care workers. Currently, there is no evidence that SARS is spreading more widely in the community in the United States.

6. What is the 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.

7. How may I protect myself and my family from getting SARS?

There are some common-sense measures that you can take to prevent the spread of SARS that apply to many infectious diseases. The most important is frequent hand washing with soap and water or use of alcohol-based hand rubs (See [Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings](#)). In addition, you should 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.

8. Personnel returning or arriving from defined affected areas should report immediately to their supporting medical treatment facility for screening. Agencies and commands who host foreign visitors or provide training to foreign persons arriving from these areas monitor the health of these personnel on a daily basis and refer any individual with illness for immediate medical evaluation.

9. What are my local health officials doing to protect my community from the spreading of SARS?

R.W. Bliss Army Health Center's Preventive Medicine Wellness and Readiness Center are working Closely with the local health departments to stay informed on the latest news and health precautions in dealing with a possible SARS case in your community. We are attending conferences as soon as they are offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Our staff is educated and prepared to answer questions and concerns and to care for any patient who may need assessing for possible contact with SARS.

10. Any other questions or concerns may be directed to the unit's local Medical Support Unit and specifically the Preventive Medicine Department. For Fort Huachuca please call 533-3536 or 533-5668 for any questions or concerns.