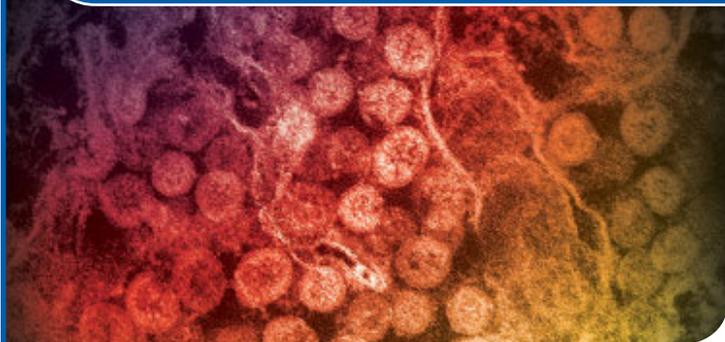


Information about Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)



What is MERS?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a respiratory illness. It is caused by a virus called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus, or MERS-CoV. This virus was first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia. It is different from any other coronaviruses that have been found in people before.

What is the source of MERS-CoV?

MERS-CoV likely came from an animal source in the Arabian Peninsula¹. In addition to humans, MERS-CoV has been found in camels in several countries. It is possible that some people became infected after having contact with camels. However, more information is needed to figure out the possible role that camels and other animals may play in transmission of MERS-CoV.

What are the symptoms and complications that MERS can cause?

Most people confirmed to have MERS-CoV infection have had severe acute respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

About 3 to 4 out of every 10 people reported with MERS have died. Most of the people who died had an underlying medical condition. Some infected people had mild symptoms (such as cold-like symptoms) or no symptoms at all.

How does the virus spread?

MERS-CoV, like other coronaviruses, is thought to spread from an infected person's respiratory secretions, such as through coughing. However, the precise ways the virus spreads are not currently well understood.

MERS-CoV has spread from ill people to others through close contact, such as caring for or living with an infected person. Infected people have spread MERS-CoV to others in healthcare settings, such as hospitals.

Have there been MERS cases in the United States?

In May 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed two cases of MERS. Both patients were healthcare providers who recently traveled from Saudi Arabia, where they are believed to have been infected. Both were hospitalized in the U.S. and later discharged after fully recovering. CDC and other public health partners continue to look for and test people who may have MERS; more than 750 people in the United States have tested negative. See CDC's MERS in the U.S. website for the most current information: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/us.html>.

Am I at risk for MERS-CoV infection in the United States?

The MERS situation in the U.S. represents a very low risk to the general public in this country. CDC continues to closely monitor the situation. Some people may be at increased risk for MERS-CoV infection, including

- recent travelers from the Arabian Peninsula¹
- people who have had close contact, such as caring for or living with, an ill traveler from the Arabian Peninsula¹
- people who have had close contact, such as caring for or living with, a confirmed case of MERS
- healthcare personnel who do not use recommended infection-control precautions
- people who have had contact with camels

If you think you may have been exposed to MERS-CoV, call ahead to a doctor and see information on the CDC website for People Who May Be at Increased Risk for MERS (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/risk.html>).



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

CDC does not recommend that anyone change their travel plans because of MERS. If you are traveling to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula¹ to provide healthcare services, you should review CDC's Infection Control Recommendations for Hospitalized Patients with MERS (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/infection-prevention-control.html>). Other travelers to these areas should take general steps to protect their health.

For a list of countries with MERS cases, see the World Health Organization coronavirus infections website: www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en.

How can I help protect myself?

CDC routinely advises that people help protect themselves from respiratory illnesses by taking everyday preventive actions:

- 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 personal contact, such as kissing, or sharing cups or eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.

If you are caring for or living with a person confirmed with, or being evaluated for, MERS, see CDC Guidance for Preventing MERS-CoV from Spreading in Homes and Communities (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/hcp/home-care-patient.html>).

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 or near the Arabian Peninsula¹, you should call ahead to a doctor and mention your recent travel.



What should I do if I recently traveled to the Arabian Peninsula 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 or near the Arabian Peninsula¹, you should call ahead to a doctor and mention your recent travel. While sick, stay home from work or school and delay future travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against MERS. The U.S. National Institutes of Health is exploring the possibility of developing one.

What are the treatments?

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for MERS-CoV infection. Individuals with MERS can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, current treatment includes care to support vital organ functions.

Footnote

1. Countries considered in the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring include: Bahrain; Iraq; Iran; Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Oman; Qatar, Saudi Arabia; Syria; the United Arab Emirates (UAE); and Yemen.

Additional Information

- CDC MERS website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers
- CDC Travel Alert: MERS in the Arabian Peninsula: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/coronavirus-saudi-arabia-qatar>
- CDC Infection Control Recommendations: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/infection-prevention-control.html>
- People Who May Be at Increased Risk for MERS: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/risk.html>
- World Health Organization coronavirus infections website: www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en