

Coronavirus infections

MERS-CoV (Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome coronavirus)

What are coronavirus infections?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause a range of illnesses in humans, from the common cold to SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome). Viruses of this family also cause illness in animals.

What is MERS?

MERS is a disease of the lungs caused by a new coronavirus. Doctors first started seeing MERS in 2012. It is a serious illness that can be fatal. Most MERS infections have happened in countries on or near the Arabian Peninsula. Cases reported in other areas have all linked back to the Arabian Peninsula.

How do people get MERS?

We are still learning how MERS is spread. People can get MERS from other people, but not very easily.

Some people who cared for those who were sick with MERS also became ill. MERS might come from other sources, possibly from animals.

Who is at risk for MERS?

So far, all people ill with MERS have had some connection to the Arabian Peninsula. Most live in or recently traveled there. A few had close contact with someone who recently traveled to that area. Older people or people with diabetes, lung disease or other serious health problems appear to be at higher risk for severe illness or death from MERS.



What are the signs and symptoms of MERS?

People become sick with MERS within 14 days of being exposed to it. People with MERS get fever, cough and have trouble breathing. Some may also have vomiting or diarrhea. The main risk for infection is recent travel on or near the Arabian Peninsula. If you or a friend or family member gets these symptoms and visited the Arabian Peninsula in the last two weeks, contact your doctor. If someone is really having trouble breathing, call 911.

I recently arrived from the Arabian Peninsula. If I get sick with cough, fever, and trouble breathing, what should I do?

People who recently traveled to countries in and around the Arabian Peninsula should call their doctor right away if they get these symptoms. Their doctor can help determine if they have MERS, can arrange for needed medical care, and can advise on how to prevent spread of illness to family members and others in their community.

I plan to go to the Arabian Peninsula soon. Is there a recommendation about travel there?

The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that some people are at higher risk of getting sick from MERS. WHO recommends anyone with diabetes, lung disease or decreased immunity should consult their doctor before traveling. At this time, neither WHO nor the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend changing travel plans to the Arabian Peninsula because of MERS.

For current information about CDC Travel Health Notices, see: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices



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