



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory illness caused by the SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV). It was first reported in Asia in 2003. The SARS outbreak of 2003 made it a disease to watch. While it seems SARS has subsided in its aggression, with no known cases reported worldwide since 2004, it is always best to be informed and prepared.

Transmission

- SARS is thought to be spread through close person-to-person contact (within 3 feet).
- SARS is most effectively spread through respiratory droplets emitted when an infected individual coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets may be transferred through the air when breathing close to an infected individual and by touching an area covered with the droplets.
- Once exposed, SARS may incubate in the body for 2–10 days.
- An individual with SARS may be contagious up to 10 days after the fever and respiratory symptoms have subsided.

Symptoms

- Early onset fever (100.4°F or more)
- Headache and body aches
- Mild respiratory symptoms at onset
- 10%-20% have diarrhea
- A dry, nonproductive cough, which may lead to hypoxia (low oxygen levels in the blood) and may require ventilation
- Pneumonia

Treatment

- There is currently no specific treatment for SARS.
- It is recommended individuals infected with SARS be treated with the same techniques as any other severe pneumonia.

Prevention

- Always wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of germs.
- Avoid touching anything or anyone with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and encourage others to do so.

Where to Find Additional Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—
 - » www.cdc.gov/sars/about/fs-SARS.pdf
 - » www.cdc.gov/sars/
- World Health Organization—www.who.int/csr/sars/en