

A Novel Coronavirus Called "MERS-CoV" in the Arabian Peninsula

The information below reflects the most current data available as of September 23, 2013. Visit <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/coronavirus-arabian-peninsula-uk> for continued updates.

What Is the Current Situation?

Cases of respiratory illness caused by Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) have been identified in multiple countries. MERS-CoV was previously called "novel coronavirus." For more information, see CDC's MERS website <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/>

CDC recommends that US travelers to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula* pay attention to their health during and after their trip. Travelers should see a doctor right away if they develop fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula. They should tell the doctor about their recent travel. CDC does not recommend that travelers change their plans because of MERS. However, the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health has made special recommendations for travelers to Hajj and Umrah. Because of the risk of MERS, Saudi Arabia recommends that the following groups should postpone their plans for Hajj and Umrah this year:

- People over 65 years old
- Children under 12 years old
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic diseases (such as heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, or respiratory disease)
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with cancer or terminal illnesses

CDC encourages people traveling to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj or Umrah to consider this advice. People who are concerned about MERS should discuss their travel plans with their doctor.

To learn more about CDC's health recommendations for Hajj and Umrah visit <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/hajj-umrah-2013>

What Is a Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a cause of the common cold. A coronavirus also was the cause of the severe respiratory illness called SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome). SARS caused a global epidemic in 2003, but there have not been any known cases of SARS since 2004. MERS-CoV is not the same coronavirus that caused SARS.

What Is Known About MERS-CoV?

MERS-CoV is different from any other coronavirus that has been previously found in people. Symptoms of MERS have included fever, cough, and shortness of breath. CDC is working with the World Health Organization and other partners to understand the public health risks from this virus.

How Can Travelers Protect Themselves?

Taking these everyday actions can help prevent the spread of germs and protect against colds, flu, and other illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Be sure you are up-to-date with all of your shots, and if possible, see your healthcare provider at least 4–6 weeks before travel to get any additional shots.
- Visit CDC's Travelers' Health website for more information on healthy travel <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>.
- If you are sick:
 - Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Avoid contact with other people to keep from infecting them.

When Should Someone See a Health Care Provider?

You should see a health care provider if you develop a fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula*. You should tell the health care provider about your recent travel.

Clinician Information:

Health care providers should be alert to patients who develop severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., requiring hospitalization) within 14 days after traveling from countries in the Arabian Peninsula* or neighboring countries, excluding those who transited at airports without entering the countries.

- Consider other more common causes of respiratory illness, such as influenza.
- Evaluate patients using CDC's case definitions and guidance (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/case-def.html>).
- Immediately report patients with unexplained respiratory illness and who meet CDC's criteria for "patient under investigation (PUI)" to CDC through the state or local health department. A PUI is a person with -
 - an acute respiratory infection, which may include fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$, 100.4°F) and cough; AND
 - suspicion of pulmonary parenchymal disease (e.g., pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome based on clinical or radiologic evidence of consolidation); AND
 - history of travel from countries in the Arabian Peninsula* or neighboring countries* within 14 days; AND
 - not already explained by any other infection or etiology, including all clinically indicated tests for community-acquired pneumonia according to local management guidelines.
- Collect specimens for MERS-CoV testing from all PUIs.
- Contact your state or local health department if you have any questions.
- See additional recommendations and guidance on CDC's MERS website (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/>).
- Health departments with questions should contact CDC's Emergency Operations Center (770-488-7100).

Additional Information:

- CDC Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)
- (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/index.html>)
- Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) Interim Guidance for Airline Crew: Report Ill Travelers on Flights Arriving to the United States (CDC Quarantine site) (<http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/travel-industry/air/mers-interim-guidance-airline-crew-report-ill-travelers-flights-arriving-united-states.html>)
- WHO Coronavirus Infection (http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html)
- Novel Coronavirus, Public Health England (<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/NovelCoronavirus/>)
- ECDC: Updates to Rapid Risk Assessment on MERS-CoV (PDF) (<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/risk-assessment-middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus-MERS-CoV-17-may-2013.pdf>)
- Update: Recommendations for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). MMWR July 12, 2013/62 (27); 557. (http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6227a4.htm?s_cid=mm6227a4_w)
- Update: Severe Respiratory Illness Associated with a Novel Coronavirus—Worldwide, 2012–2013 MMWR March 7, 2013/62 (Early Release); 1–2 (http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6210a4.htm?s_cid=mm6210a4_w)
- Severe Respiratory Illness Associated with a Novel Coronavirus — Saudi Arabia and Qatar, 2012 MMWR October 12, 2012/61; 820–820. (http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6140a5.htm?s_cid=mm6140a5_w)

*Countries considered in the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring include: Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen.

For more information, visit
www.cdc.gov/travel or call
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

