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WHAT IS SARS?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory illness that was first reported in Asia in February 2003. In early March 2003, the World Health Organization issued a global alert about SARS. Over the next few months the illness spread to two dozen countries in the world.



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SYMPTOMS

The illness usually begins with a high fever (greater than 100.4 °F). The fever is sometimes associated with chills or other symptoms, including headache, general feeling of discomfort and body aches. Some people also experience mild respiratory symptoms at the outset. Diarrhea is seen in approximately 10 percent to 20 percent of patients.

After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry, nonproductive cough that might be accompanied by or progress to a condition in which insufficient oxygen is getting to the blood. In 10 percent to 20 percent of cases, patients require mechanical ventilation. Most patients develop pneumonia.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Who's at risk?**
Most of the U.S. cases occurred among travelers returning to the United States from other parts of the world affected by SARS. Also, individuals that have close contact with an infected person.
- **What is the treatment for SARS?**
CDC recommends that patients with SARS receive the same treatment that would be used for any patient with serious community-acquired atypical pneumonia. Testing on antiviral drugs for an effective treatment against the virus is being conducted.
- **What causes SARS?**
A newly identified Coronavirus is believed to cause SARS in humans.
- **If I were exposed to SARS, how long would it take for me to become sick?**
The time between exposure and onset of symptoms is typically 2 to 7 days; in some cases it may be as long as 10 days.
- **Who do I call if I think I have SARS?**
If you have the above symptoms for more than 72 hours contact your physician.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>

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