

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. As of September 2013, more than 100 people have gotten sick with MERS worldwide. About half of these people died. Most of these illnesses have happened in Saudi Arabia, with some cases reported in Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Cases reported in Europe and North Africa 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 to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar or the United Arab Emirates. A few had close contact with someone who recently travelled there. 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?

Anyone in this situation should call their doctor right away. 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 is restricting travel to the Arabian Peninsula.

Learn more about MERS and travel at: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/hajj-umrah-2013

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