



## MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

### What is MERS?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus called “Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus” (MERS-CoV). MERS affects the respiratory system (lungs and breathing tubes). MERS was first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia.

### Where has MERS been detected?

Cases of MERS have been linked to countries in the Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, and Yemen. Countries with MERS cases in people who had travelled to high risk areas include Algeria, Austria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom (UK), and United States. In 2014, there were two confirmed cases of MERS in the United States. Both cases were healthcare providers who lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/).



### What is the source of MERS-CoV?

It is unclear where MERS-CoV came from, but it is suspected to have come from an animal. MERS-CoV has been found in camels and a bat in the Arabian Peninsula. More information is needed to see if camels, bats, and other animals play a role in spreading MERS-CoV.

### What are the symptoms of MERS?

People with MERS develop severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms include diarrhea and nausea or vomiting. More severe complications such as pneumonia and kidney failure can occur. About 3 of every 10 people reported with MERS have died, but most had other medical problems. Some infected people can also have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

### Who is at an increased risk for getting MERS?

- Recent travelers from the Arabian Peninsula
- Close contacts of an ill traveler from the Arabian Peninsula
- People recently in a healthcare facility in the Republic of Korea
- Close contacts of a confirmed case of MERS
- Healthcare personnel who had close contact with a confirmed case of MERS while the case was ill and did not use recommended personal protective equipment
- People with exposure to camels

### Who has a higher risk to develop severe complications from MERS?

People with diabetes, kidney failure, chronic lung problems or a weakened immune system have a higher risk to become seriously ill if they get MERS.

### **Does MERS spread from person to person?**

Yes. MERS can spread between people who are in close contact. This includes anyone who provided care for an ill person (including healthcare workers and family members) and anyone who stayed in the same place with an infected person (e.g. lived with, visited).

### **Is there a vaccine?**

There is currently no vaccine for MERS.

### **What is the treatment for MERS?**

There is no specific treatment for MERS. Individuals with MERS get care to help lessen their symptoms.

### **Can I still travel to countries where MERS cases have occurred?**

There are currently no travel bans to countries with MERS cases. For current information on travel and MERS, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/).

### **What if I recently traveled to a country that has reported MERS and I get sick?**

If you develop a fever and have a cough or shortness of breath within 14 days after traveling to the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries, contact your healthcare provider immediately. Tell your healthcare provider about your symptoms and recent travel history. Your health care provider will determine if you need to be tested for MERS.

### **What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has MERS?**

If you have had close contact with a confirmed MERS case within the last 14 days, contact your healthcare provider for an evaluation.

## **How can I help protect myself?**

*Follow these tips to help prevent respiratory illnesses:*

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact (kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils, etc.) with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs.
- For travelers, always practice general hygiene measures, including regular hand washing before and after touching animals, and avoid contact with sick animals. Travelers should also avoid consumption of raw or undercooked animal products.

