



Atlantic County Division of Public Health

Important Information About SARS

Updated 7/9/03

What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or "SARS" is a serious, potentially life threatening, respiratory illness. The disease is caused by a newly recognized virus.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

SARS symptoms generally occur 3-5 days after close contact with someone who already contracted SARS. Symptoms include: fever (over 100.4° F) AND dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing.

Who is at risk for contracting SARS?

Individuals who have been in **direct, close contact** with someone who has SARS may be at risk. (Close contact means having cared for, lived with or had face-to-face contact with someone who has SARS.)

Travelers returning from Beijing (excluding Mainland China), Hong Kong or Taiwan may also have been exposed to SARS. If so, symptoms will usually develop within 10 days of their trip.

How is SARS spread?

It is believed that SARS is spread by close contact with an infected individual, primarily from coughing and sneezing. To date, the majority of those infected with SARS are people who have traveled to Asia, health workers who have cared for SARS patients, or family members of SARS patients.

Can SARS be treated?

There is no specific treatment. SARS patients receive supportive care along with antibiotics and antiviral agents. Hospitals are also taking precautions to contain the spread of SARS.

Should travelers returning from the affected countries stay home from work or school?

No. People who have no symptoms of illness should continue their normal routines. If returning travelers do experience symptoms, they should be checked by a physician.

What can I do to protect myself from SARS?

Frequent and careful hand washing is one of the best ways to protect yourself not only from SARS but from many other contagious diseases.

What is being done to prevent the spread of SARS?

Federal health officials are screening travelers arriving from countries experiencing SARS outbreaks by checking them for symptoms. Health officials are also advising travelers coming from these countries to monitor their health for 10 days. However, there are no travel or activity restrictions on these passengers as long as they have no symptoms.

Locally, the County Division of Public Health is working closely with area hospitals and doctors to be on the alert for people with SARS symptoms and to prevent the spread of this infection in the South Jersey community.

Where can I get more information about SARS?



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For the latest information regarding SARS, log onto the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/>.