Fact Sheet

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?
SARS is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus, called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV). SARS was first reported in Asia in February 2003, but spread to North America, South America, and Europe as well. Currently there is no known SARS transmission anywhere in the world. The most recent human cases of SARS were reported in China in 2004.

Who gets SARS?
People who have had close contact with an infected person are most likely to contract SARS. Close contact means having cared for or lived with someone with SARS or having direct contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids of a patient with SARS. Examples include kissing, hugging, sharing eating or drinking utensils, and talking to someone within 3 feet.

How is SARS spread?
SARS is spread mainly through close person-to-person contact. The virus is transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the droplets are deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons nearby (usually within 3 feet). The virus can also spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the symptoms of SARS?
SARS can have an incubation period of 2 to 7 days, with isolated reports of up to 10 days. SARS usually begins with a high fever, greater than 100.4°F. Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also have mild respiratory symptoms at the outset. About 10% to 20% have diarrhea. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough accompanied by difficulty breathing, which can progress to pneumonia.

What is the treatment for SARS?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that patients with SARS receive the same treatment that would be used for anyone that has acquired atypical pneumonia of unknown cause. Currently, many medications have been used to
treat SARS, but there is insufficient evidence at this time that any specific medicine works well. SARS-CoV is being tested against various antiviral drugs to see if an effective treatment can be found.

**How can SARS be prevented?**
While you are in an area with SARS:
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water to protect against SARS infection.
- Consider avoiding close contact with large numbers of people as much as possible to minimize the possibility of infection.
- CDC does not recommend the routine use of masks or other personal protective equipment while in public areas.

Travel advisories should be checked before traveling. These advisories can be found on the CDC or World Health Organization (WHO) websites (see below).

**For individuals considering travel to areas with SARS:**
CDC issues two types of notices to travelers: advisories and alerts. A travel advisory recommends that nonessential travel be deferred. A travel alert does not advise against travel, but informs travelers of a health concern and provides advice about specific precautions. CDC updates information on its website on the travel status of areas with SARS (https://www.cdc.gov/sars/travel/).

**For individuals who think they may have SARS:**
People with symptoms of SARS are advised to consult a health-care provider. Remember to tell your provider about any recent travel to places where SARS has been reported or whether there was contact with someone who had these symptoms in order to help the health-care provider make a diagnosis.

**How do I get more information on SARS?**
Calhoun County Public Health Department
Phone: 269-969-6383

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)
Website: www.cdc.gov/sars/index.html
Spanish: www.cdc.gov/sars/about/fs-sars-sp.html

World Health Organization
Website: www.who.int/csr/sars/en/

*SARS*
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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor’s orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.