

Living with SARS

WHAT IS SARS?

Sars stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome. It is a new, severe form of pneumonia which can kill. Scientists believe it is caused by a virus.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- ◆ The virus seems to spread through tiny droplets breathed out by a sick person and from the body secretions of an infected person.
- ◆ You can come into contact with these droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- ◆ Transmission is believed to happen within a one-metre radius of an infected person.
- ◆ You can be at risk if you come into contact with bodily fluids of a victim - even by touching a cup handled by the sick person and then wiping your mouth.
- ◆ Casual contact, such as passing a person on the street, is unlikely to cause infection.
- ◆ The virus is believed to stay alive on surfaces for three hours.

WATCH OUT FOR:

- ◆ Sudden high fever of 38 deg C, with or without muscle aches. Some patients also get chills, shivering, cough and headache.
- ◆ After three to seven days, patients may start to cough or have shortness of breath, and after a further three or four days, pneumonia.
- ◆ A person has Sars if an X-ray shows that the lungs are infected.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

To protect yourself

- ◆ Don't go to Hongkong, Guangdong, Shanxi, Taiwan, Hanoi and Toronto, unless absolutely necessary.
- ◆ If you have travelled to these places, seek immediate medical attention if you have any symptoms of Sars. Don't fly if you have such symptoms.
- ◆ If you think you have been exposed to anyone with Sars, and later develop a fever, don't go to work. See a doctor.
- ◆ If you are unwell, avoid crowded places.
- ◆ Practise good personal hygiene, such as washing your hands often.

To protect others

- ◆ If you are sick, see a doctor immediately. Don't go to work.
- ◆ If your child is sick, take him to a doctor, not to school.
- ◆ Wear a face mask if you are ill.
- ◆ Stay at home if you are ill, avoid crowded places.
- ◆ Don't take public transport if you suspect you have Sars. Call for an ambulance.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ◆ Call the Ministry of Health's hotline on 1800 2254122 or visit its website at www.moh.gov.sg

SINGAPORE'S STRATEGY

ONE HOSPITAL FOR SARS

- ◆ Tan Tock Seng Hospital is Singapore's Sars centre.
- ◆ Special rooms have been set up there for Sars patients.
- ◆ Disposable plastic gowns, gloves and masks are a must for staff who handle Sars patients, and the gowns and gloves must be disposed of before they leave the patient's room.
- ◆ Staff wear white T-shirts and baggy blue trousers instead of uniforms, for comfort and protection. Before leaving each day, they shower and change into their own clothes, leaving the T-shirts and trousers to be laundered.
- ◆ The hospital has bought several dozen germ warfare masks for use in high-risk procedures. These masks have pumps to suck in air from the back and blow it out the front.

GUARDING AGAINST THE BUG

QUARANTINE

- ◆ Strict stay-home orders for those who are known to be in contact with victims. Fines can be imposed on those who violate orders.
- ◆ Daily checks on those quarantined.
- ◆ Those at home must check their temperature every day for 10 days.
- ◆ If symptoms appear, they are taken by ambulance to Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

SCHOOLS

- ◆ Schools have been shut down - junior colleges reopen tomorrow, secondary schools on April 14 and primary schools on April 16.
- ◆ All students and parents will be asked if they have been to Sars-hit areas, and those who have must stay at home for 10 days.
- ◆ Unwell students will be isolated, parents will have to take them to the doctor.
- ◆ If someone in a school is suspected of having Sars, that school will be closed for three days so that all those who had contact with the infected person can be tracked down.

TRAVELLERS

- ◆ Airlines flying to Changi Airport will ask passengers if they are unwell, were near Sars patients or had been to Sars-hit areas before they get on plane to Singapore.
- ◆ Any visibly unwell passenger must have a doctor's letter certifying him fit to fly.
- ◆ Nurses check patients arriving from Sars-hit countries. Those with fever are sent to Tan Tock Seng Hospital.
- ◆ Ship passengers from Sars-hit areas are also checked.
- ◆ All air and sea passengers must fill in health declaration cards, saying if they have Sars symptoms and if they have been to a Sars-affected area in the past 10 days. Fines may be imposed on those who fail to do so or give false information.