



MERS-CoV

[Middle East Respiratory Syndrome \(MERS\)](#) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS Co-V). This disease is new to humans, first occurring in Jordan and Saudi Arabia in 2012. So far all MERS cases have been linked to countries in and near the Arabian Peninsula. MERS-CoV spreads through close contact, such as living with or caring for a person with MERS. The virus is thought to spread from an infected person's respiratory secretions, such as through coughing. However, the precise ways the virus spreads are not currently well understood.



Most people with confirmed MERS have had severe acute respiratory illness, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath. About 3 or 4 out of every 10 patients reported with MERS have died. Most of the people who have died from MERS have had underlying health conditions. There is no specific medicine to treat MERS-CoV infection other than supportive care. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent MERS-CoV infection.

Persons of any age may be infected. Persons at risk are those with recent travel to the Arabian Peninsula or who have had close contact with a person with MERS. As of October 1, 2015, there have been only 2 cases of MERS in the United States, both in persons recently returning from countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

Health care providers should inquire about travel history and consider MERS in patients with respiratory illness and recent history of travel to countries in the Arabian Peninsula or who have had close contact with a confirmed case of MERS. Travelers who have recently returned from a MERS-CoV affected area who experience a respiratory illness should seek health care and inform their healthcare provider of their travel history.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) routinely advises that people help protect themselves from respiratory illnesses by taking everyday preventive actions:

- 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, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid personal contact, such as kissing, or sharing cups or eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.