

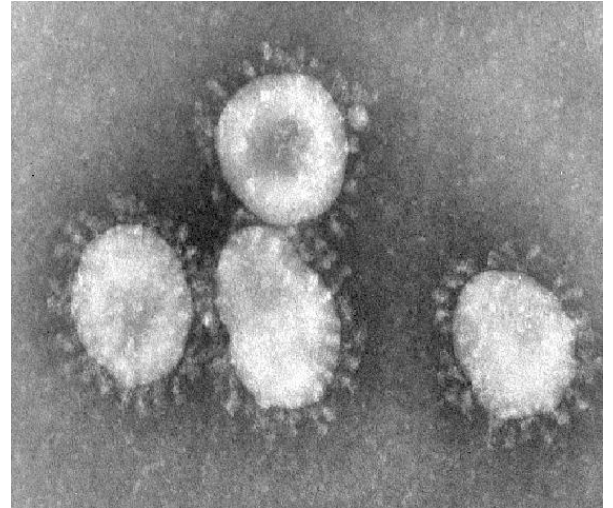
SARS

(Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)

What is SARS?

SARS stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Sndrome. It is a viral respiratory illness that was first recognized as a threat in March 2003, after it appeared in southern China a few months earlier.

SARS is caused by a coronavirus, called SARS-associated coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that have a halo or crown-like (corona) appearance when viewed under a microscope (see image to the right). These viruses are a common cause of mild to moderate upper respiratory illness in humans.



What are the symptoms of SARS?

SARS typically begins with a high fever (a body temperature greater than 100.4°F). Fever can be accompanied by chills or other symptoms including headache, body aches, and a general feeling of discomfort.

At the beginning of illness, some people may experience mild respiratory symptoms. Diarrhea may also occur in some individuals.

Anywhere from two to seven days after onset of symptoms, a person with SARS may develop a dry cough that may progress to a condition in which oxygen levels in the blood become low (hypoxia). Most patients develop pneumonia. In 10-20% of cases, patients require mechanical ventilation.

How SARS is spread?

The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Close contact means that you have either cared for or lived with a person known to have SARS, or that you have a high likelihood of direct contact with respiratory secretions and/or body fluids of a patient known to have SARS. Examples of close person-to-person contact may include the following: kissing or embracing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, close conversation (within 3 feet), physical examination, and any other direct physical contact between people. Close contact does not usually include activities such as walking by a person, or briefly sitting across a waiting room or office from them.

SARS is spread through respiratory droplets that are propelled short distances in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object that has been contaminated with infectious droplets and then that person touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye(s).

How is SARS treated?

It is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that patients with SARS receive the same treatment as a patient with any serious community-acquired atypical pneumonia. Currently various antiviral drugs are being tested to see if an effective specific treatment can be found.

How can SARS be prevented?

Many of the same precautions that a person can take to protect against becoming infected with other infectious diseases are applicable for SARS. Most important is frequent [hand washing](#) with soap and water (an alcohol-based gel can be effective as well). Also avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with hands. Also, it is important to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or with your elbow when coughing or sneezing.

To prevent from spreading the illness it is important for persons with SARS to limit their interactions outside of the home (e.g. by not going to work or school).

More about the 2003 Global SARS Outbreak

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) from November 2002 through July 2003, a total of 8,098 people worldwide became sick with SARS that was accompanied by either pneumonia or respiratory distress syndrome. Of these, 774 died. By late July 2003, no new cases were being reported, and WHO declared the global outbreak to be over.

In the United States, only eight people were confirmed (through laboratory testing) to have had SARS and there were no SARS related deaths. All eight of the confirmed SARS cases in the U.S. had traveled to areas where SARS Coronavirus transmission was occurring.

To date, all diagnosed cases and cases under investigation have been linked to chains of transmission involving close personal contact with an identified case. There is no evidence of wider transmission in the community.

Where can I get more information on SARS?

- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) SARS web site [click here](#).

Utah Department of Health
Bureau of Epidemiology
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