



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome: Information for Health Care Workers

SARS is a pneumonia that appears to be caused by a new coronavirus and to be highly infectious to close contacts, including health-care workers.

All patients who seek care at a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) should be asked targeted questions to assess their risk of SARS.

Prompt, good infection control measures prevent the transmission of SARS to health-care workers.

Hand hygiene is the best measure to protect health-care workers from SARS.

BACKGROUND

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization have received reports of patients with **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**. A novel coronavirus is believed to be responsible for the global epidemic of SARS. Some close contacts (including health-care workers) of patients infected with SARS have developed similar illnesses.

HOW SHOULD MY CLINIC SCREEN FOR SARS?

Screen all patients for SARS who call for an appointment or present to Military Treatment Facilities with **Fever, Cough, or Any Difficulty Breathing**. Use the following SARS screening questions:

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| <p>1. In the last 10 days have you had close or direct contact (i.e., living with or providing health care for, kissing, embracing, sharing eating/drinking utensils, conversation < 3 feet) with any person(s) with SARS?</p> <p>YES NO</p> |
| <p>2. In the last 10 days have you traveled to a country where SARS is being transmitted (check updated list daily at http://www.who.int/csr/sars/areas/en/)</p> <p>YES NO</p> |

Further clinic triage information is at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/triage_interim_guidance.htm

WHERE CAN I FIND OTHER CLINICAL INFORMATION?

Regularly check the SARS "Information for Clinicians" website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/clinicians.htm>

View current CDC presentations and reference materials at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/training.htm>

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN THERE IS A PATIENT SUSPECTED OF HAVING SARS?

Based on the screening questions above or on the clinician's evaluation, if a patient is suspected of having SARS, the following steps should be taken with the patient to limit the potential spread of the disease:

- **Surgical mask** over patient's nose and mouth
- If mask not possible, have the patient **cover his/her mouth with a disposable tissue** when coughing, talking, or sneezing
- **Separate the patient from others**, preferably in a **private room with negative pressure** relative to the surrounding area

Since SARS transmission has often occurred to health care workers caring for SARS patients, CDC recommends the following measures for health-care workers caring for a patient with suspected SARS:

- **Hand hygiene – the best protective measure!**
 - Use soap and water, OR
 - If hands are not visibly soiled, **alcohol-based hand rubs** may be used as an alternative to hand washing.
- **Gown and gloves**
- **N95 respirators**, equivalent or better (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/respirators.htm>); when N95 respirators are not available, health-care workers should wear **surgical masks**
- **Eye protection**

For all cases of suspected SARS **contact the MTF Preventive Medicine Service** to assist in management and contact tracing.

See CDC SARS Infection Control updates at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/infectioncontrol.htm>

Fact sheet available: <http://www.chppmeur.healthcare.hqusareur.army.mil/>

References and more information:

1. World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/>
3. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) <http://www.ha.osd.mil/>
4. DoD Global Emerging Infections System <http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil/>

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