



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome: Information for Travelers

Travelers on commercial airlines have very low risk of getting SARS.

Good hand hygiene and frequent hand washing are the best measures to protect travelers from SARS.

People who travel from a SARS area should be screened for fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

BACKGROUND

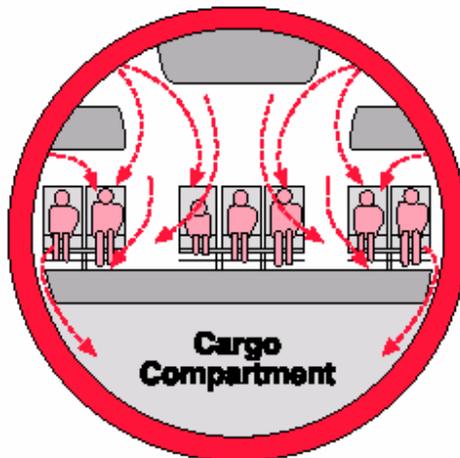
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have received reports of patients with **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**.

WHAT IS THE RISK OF MY GETTING SARS IF I TRAVEL ON A COMMERCIAL AIRLINE?

Your risk is very low. To date, transmission of SARS to passengers has occurred on four out of 35 flights in which a person with SARS has traveled. Two of these flights preceded WHO's 15 March 2003 emergency travel advisory. Since 23 March 2003 and the introduction of recommended pre-flight screening measures by public health authorities, no further cases of SARS transmission in flight have been documented.

This low risk is due to the **sterility of the air** entering the aircraft at cruising altitude, the **high airflow rates** (the entire cabin air volume is exchanged every three minutes), the **airflow pattern in the passenger cabin** (see diagram), and the **high-efficiency filters** that clean recirculated air. This means that the spread of all microbes is minimized in the cabin.

Cabin Air Flow



Airports in countries in which local SARS transmission has occurred have instituted screening measures, often with temperature surveys, to exclude persons with early symptoms of SARS from traveling.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREVENT GETTING SARS WHEN I TRAVEL?

Currently the CDC and the WHO:

- Do NOT recommend the routine use of masks by healthy passengers or airline staff
- DO recommend good hand hygiene and frequent hand washing with soap and water to prevent SARS; if hands are not soiled, alcohol-based hand rubs work as well

ARE THERE PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE I SHOULD NOT TRAVEL BECAUSE OF SARS?

Check updated **CDC travel advisories** at

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel.htm>.

Consult the **DOD electronic foreign clearance guide** at <http://www.fcg.pentagon.mil/fcg/pacific.htm> for current country-specific

recommendations. **Permission to travel to off-limits areas (currently China, Hong Kong or Taiwan) can only be granted by USPACOM/J02** and only for mission essential travel. There is usually a requirement to register with the **American embassy** upon arrival.

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO TRAVEL FROM A SARS AREA TO MY INSTALLATION?

Ask the following two questions:

- **Do you have a fever?** YES NO
- **Do you have a cough or any difficulty breathing?** YES NO

If either of these answers is "YES," immediately have the person **cover his/her mouth with a tissue or mask**, and **contact medical authorities**.

If both answers are "NO," the person is permitted to have **normal activities such as work, school and family**. The person should be advised to **seek medical care for the first indication of fever, cough, or any breathing difficulty in the 10 days** after departure from the SARS area.

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/asd/message.html>
4. DoD Global Emerging Infections System <http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil/>
5. U.S. Pacific Command <http://www.pacom.mil>

Commander, U. S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine – Europe

ATTN: MCHB-AE-ME, CMR-402, APO AE 09180

PHONE: (DSN) 486-8951 / FAX: (DSN) 486-8938

Website: <http://www.chppmeur.healthcare.hqusareur.army.mil/>

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