

MERS

Frequently Asked Questions

What is MERS?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is an infection of the lungs caused by a virus known as a coronavirus and is written as MERS-CoV.

Does MERS spread from person to person?

The virus that causes MERS has been shown to spread between two people who are in close contact. The virus has also spread from infected people to health care workers.

What are the symptoms of MERS?

Most people who got infected with MERS-CoV became severely ill with a respiratory illness with symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

About half of the people with severe symptoms have died. Some people have been reported as having a mild respiratory illness.

How is MERS diagnosed?

Lab tests can be done by the New Jersey Department of Health.

What is the treatment for MERS?

There is no known treatment other than supportive care.

Is there a vaccine?

No, but the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is discussing with partners the possibility of developing one.

How can I help protect myself?

The CDC says that people should follow these tips to help prevent respiratory illness:

- 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 close contact, such as kissing, or sharing cups or eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs.

What if I recently traveled to countries in the Arabian Peninsula or nearby countries and got sick?

If you get a fever and symptoms of a respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after traveling from countries in the Arabian Peninsula or nearby countries, you should call your health care provider and tell him/her about your recent travel. If you go to see a health care provider, wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose or ask for one as soon as you get to the doctor's office.

Which countries are in the Arabian Peninsula or are nearby?

- Bahrain
- Iran
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Palestinian territories
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen

Where can I get more information on MERS?

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- NJ Department of Health www.nj.gov/health
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention www.cdc.gov

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care professional. Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.