

HEALTH ALERT

**From
Ministry of Health, Malaysia
on**

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

SARS

1

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?

Since February 2003, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported outbreaks of severe forms of pneumonia in Guangdong province of China, Hanoi and Hong Kong.

Since then, similar cases have been reported in many other countries. This pneumonia is now known as **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** . The illness is characterized by initial flu-like symptoms (rapid onset of high grade fever more than 38.5 °C, muscle ache, sore throat, cough and headache); followed by difficulty in breathing and may progress to a severe form of pneumonia and even death. The illness is associated with history of travel to the above affected areas or close contact with persons who had been diagnosed with SARS.

2

What is the cause of SARS?

The cause is still unknown.

3

Is it contagious, and how is it spread?

Yes, it is contagious. It is spread through close contact (history of having cared for, having lived with, having had face to face contact with or having had contact with respiratory secretions of a probable case).

4

How soon will someone become ill after getting infected?

At the moment, the exact incubation period is unknown, but based on current available information, the most probable period is within 2 weeks.

5

Who are at risk?

Persons who have recently visited the affected areas or have been in close contact with cases of SARS.

6

Which are the high risk countries?

According to WHO report, these are Guangdong province (China), Hong Kong (China), Hanoi (Vietnam).

Recently similar cases have been reported in Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Canada.

7

Do we have cases here?

There are no reported cases so far.

8

How is SARS diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based on clinical illness, history of recent travel to high risk areas or history of close contact with persons with SARS.

9

Can it be treated?

At the moment, there is no specific treatment. However, if you have recently returned from affected areas and have flu-like symptoms, you should consult your doctor.

10 **What should I do to protect myself?**

You are advised to avoid travel to affected areas, unless absolutely necessary. Avoid contact with known cases, but if you need to be in close contact with cases, you are advised to practice good personal hygiene and use an appropriate protective mask.

11 **Is there a vaccination for SARS?**

There is no specific vaccination.

12 **Can I travel to China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and other affected areas?**

It is advisable to avoid travel to affected areas, unless absolutely necessary.



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