



GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS

SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)?

SARS is a new disease which presents itself as a severe form of pneumonia. The disease was first reported among people in Guangdong Province, China, Hanoi, Vietnam and Hong Kong. It has since spread to other countries.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SARS?

- SARS begins with a high fever greater than 38.0° C or 100.4° F.
- Followed by respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath and/or difficulty breathing.
- Other symptoms include headache, muscle stiffness, loss of appetite, feeling of discomfort, confusion, rash and diarrhea.
- Reports indicate that a small number of persons affected by SARS can become severely ill, but to date more than 90% have recovered completely.

HOW DO YOU GET SARS?

Public health experts think that SARS is spread from person to person through close contact with an infected person. SARS is most

likely spread when someone sick with the disease coughs droplets into the air and someone else breathes them in. It is also believed that SARS can be spread from touching objects that have been contaminated with the virus.

HOW IS SARS DIAGNOSED?

In the absence of a laboratory test, doctors are using the following criteria to diagnose SARS:

A person presenting with a history of:

- High fever over 38° C or 100.4° F
- One or more respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Close contact within 10 days of onset of symptoms, with a person who has been diagnosed with SARS
- History of travel within 10 days of onset of symptoms, to countries where the SARS virus is circulating

WHO IS AT RISK FOR SARS?

At this time, the only risk factors identified are recent travel to affected countries, or close contact with a person who has SARS. Close contact includes living in the same household, providing health care to someone with SARS, or having direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with SARS.

HOW CONTAGIOUS IS SARS?

It usually takes between 2 to 10 days for symptoms to appear after being exposed to someone who has SARS. Persons with SARS are only contagious while ill.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF SARS?

Practising good personal hygiene is a key to stopping the spread of SARS. Thorough hand washing, using warm, soapy water and lathering for at least 20 seconds is the single most important procedure for preventing infections.

An alcohol-based hand sanitizing rub or gel may also be used.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MAY HAVE SARS?

Contact the Medical Officer of Health at the Polyclinic nearest to you, explain any recent travel to countries where SARS has been reported, and/or whether you were in close contact with someone who had SARS or symptoms of SARS.

HOW IS SARS TREATED?

To date there is no vaccine or drug for treating SARS. Doctors are treating patient's symptoms and using infection control measures including isolation and barrier nursing to contain the spread of SARS.

WHAT CAUSES SARS?

Although the cause of SARS is not certain, there is a strong indication that it is linked to the coronavirus , with the possibility that other factors may also contribute. The coronavirus normally causes mild to moderate upper respiratory illness such as the common cold.

SHOULD MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC WEAR A MASK AS PROTECTION AGAINST SARS?

Masks are not recommended for use by the general public.

- No cases of SARS have been reported in Barbados to date.
- Masks are recommended if you have to come into contact with a SARS affected individual. Close contact means close enough to have the person's respiratory secretions or saliva on you. Close contact includes living in the same household as a person with SARS, providing care to someone who has SARS, or having direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with SARS.

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

SHOULD I POSTPONE TRAVELLING ON A PLANE?

Due to international travel, SARS has spread to several countries in a relatively short period of time. Advice to travellers has been revised as a means of preventing further international spread of SARS. While

there are no restrictions on air travel, the WHO recommends screening of air passengers prior to travel from affected areas. The WHO also recommended that persons travelling to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and China should consider postponing all but essential travel.

WHAT IS THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH DOING TO PROTECT BARBADIANS?

The Ministry of Health is taking all necessary precautions to protect the health of Barbadians. Control measures include informing all relevant ministries and agencies about SARS and the measures to be adopted to prevent its introduction into Barbados, enhanced surveillance measures at the air and sea ports; posting health alert notices at all ports of entry; reviewing recent travel history of incoming passengers; screening ill passengers and crew; and actively following up visitors from SARS affected countries.

REMEMBER:

HANDWASHING WITH SOAP AND WATER IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT HYGIENE METHOD TO CONTROL THE SPREAD OF INFECTIONS.

SARS HOTLINE

Welcome to the SARS Hotline of the Ministry of Health

If you are feeling ill and think you may have been exposed to someone who has SARS PRESS 1

For the Black Rock Polyclinic PRESS 2

For the Maurice Byer Polyclinic PRESS 3

For the Randal Phillips Polyclinic PRESS 4

For the St. Philip Polyclinic PRESS 5

For the Warrens Polyclinic PRESS 6

For the Winston Scott Polyclinic PRESS 7

If you would like general information about SARS please PRESS 8

Thank you for calling the SARS Hotline