

Health advice for people who have been in contact with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) patients

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?

SARS is a viral respiratory infection caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV). It is predominantly transmitted through close person-to-person contact, especially via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplet spread can take place when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby. The virus can also spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.

Symptoms of SARS can include fever (usually 38°C or above), chills, rigors, headache, malaise, muscle pain, diarrhoea, cough without sputum and difficulty in breathing.

Types of Contact with SARS patients

1. *Social Contact*

Social contact means casual contact with a person suffering from SARS, i.e. someone not involved in the care of, not living with, or not having direct contact with the respiratory secretions or body fluids of an infected person.

2. *Close Contact*

Close contact means someone who cares for, lives with, or has direct contact with the respiratory secretions or body fluids of a person with SARS.

General preventive measures for people who have been in social or close contact with SARS patients

If you have been in social or close contact with a person who is suffering from SARS and you do not have any symptoms of the disease, please note the following, which also serves as general hygiene advice for members of the public:

1. Maintain good personal hygiene :
 - Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing, coughing or clearing your throat.
 - Do not spit anywhere in public. If you need to spit, cough into a tissue paper and then dispose of the paper in a covered bin.
 - Wash hands immediately after sneezing, coughing or going to toilet.
 - Wash hands with liquid soap.
 - Wash hands properly and thoroughly, especially after touching nose, mouth and respiratory secretions e.g. after sneezing, coughing, cleaning

nose etc.

- Dry hands with a paper towel.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, if there is a need to do so, wash hands before touching them.
- Use serving chopsticks and spoons at meal time. Do not share lunch boxes and drinks.
- Shower and wash hair daily.

Please ask your family members to take the above personal hygiene measures, too !

2. Maintain a clean and hygienic environment. Clean all furniture and household facilities (desks, chairs, computers, telephones, floors, toilets, hand basins, door knobs, light switches, etc) with a diluted household bleach solution. Rinse with clean water and then wipe dry. Use a 1 : 49 diluted household bleach solution for the first time and thereafter use a 1 : 99 diluted household bleach solution daily. For metallic surfaces, use a 70% alcohol solution for cleaning. Pay attention to proper functioning and cleanliness of toilets and drains; and control breeding of pests.
3. Maintain good indoor ventilation. Open windows to improve air flow. Ensure air conditioning systems are cleaned regularly and maintained properly.
4. Avoid visiting crowded or poorly ventilated places.
5. Those who have been in close contact with patients must wear a mask (surgical mask, or N95 standard mask) for 10 days to minimise the spread of respiratory droplets (see next section). People who have had social contact with patients may also wear a mask.

Both close contacts and social contacts will be put under medical surveillance by the Department of Health, they should check and record their own body temperature at least daily. During the surveillance period, social contacts should also keep a record of daily activities and persons met, avoid leaving Hong Kong and avoid taking care of susceptible persons such as infants, pregnant women and elders.

6. If you feel unwell, and experience symptoms such as fever, respiratory symptoms or diarrhoea, you must wear a mask and seek medical advice according to the instructions given by the staff of the Department of Health.

Additional preventive measures for people who have been in close contact with SARS patients

1. All close contacts of SARS patients will be put under quarantine for 10 days or any specified period.
2. If required, a medical certificate can be obtained from the Department of Health. The doctor will state in the medical certificate that the person is 'Under medical surveillance'.

3. Wear a mask (surgical mask or N95 standard mask) for 10 days to minimise the spread of respiratory droplets.
4. Avoid close contact with family members and other people.

For more information on preventing SARS

Please call the Department of Health hotline : 187 2222 during office hours, or the Department of Health's 24-hour pre-recorded health education hotline : 2833 0111, or visit the Department of Health's website : www.dh.gov.hk

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