

Guidelines on Prevention of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome for Travellers

The Department of Health advises travellers to take the following precautionary measures to minimise the risk of contracting and spreading Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

Disease information

<http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/26528.html>

Affected Areas

Please refer to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) website for affected areas updates (http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/distribution_of_mers_cases_en.pdf)

Travellers who would like to visit the affected areas should pay attention to the following health advices:

Before departure

- Travellers (especially those with pre-existing medical conditions) should consult a doctor at least 6 weeks before travelling for medical advice.
- Prepare adequate surgical masks and 70 - 80% alcohol-based handrub.
- If you develop fever or respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, muscle pain or cough, put on a surgical mask and seek medical attention immediately. Postpone your trip until recovery.

While travelling

- Cooperate with port health authorities and comply with all necessary immigration procedures and health checks at destinations.
- Avoid going to farms, barns and markets with camels.
- Avoid contact with animals, especially camels (including riding camels or participating in any activity involving contact with camels), birds, poultry or sick people during travel.
- Wash hands before and after touching animals in case of visits to farms, barns or markets with camels.
- Avoid close contact with sick people, especially those have fever and/or respiratory symptoms such as coughing or sneezing, sore throat or muscle pain. Also, avoid visit to healthcare settings with MERS patients.
- Avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled.
- Observe personal hygiene
 - Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose.
 - Keep hands clean at all times. Wash hands frequently, especially before touching your eyes, mouth or nose, before handling food or eating after going to the toilet, and after touching public installations or equipment

such as escalator handrails, elevator control panels or door knobs or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing.

- Wash hands with liquid soap for at least 20 seconds, then dry with a disposable towel or a hand dryer.
 - If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 - 80% alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Do not spit or litter. Use a tissue paper to hold your spit. Dispose of the soiled tissues into a lidded bin, and then wash hands thoroughly.
 - Bring surgical masks with you and use it when necessary.
- Observe food hygiene
 - Five keys to food safety
 - Choose safe raw materials
 - Keep hands and utensils clean
 - Separate raw and cooked food
 - Cook thoroughly
 - Keep food at safe temperature
 - Use serving chopsticks and spoons at meal times. Do not share lunch boxes or drinks with others.
 - Maintain healthy lifestyle practices throughout the trip; do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption.
 - Observe own health condition during the trip. If you feel unwell, such as developing fever, respiratory or bowel symptoms (such as vomiting or diarrhoea), inform your tour leader/tour guide and seek medical attention promptly.

After the trip

- Wear surgical mask and seek medical attention immediately if you develop fever, respiratory and bowel symptoms within 14 days after returning from affected areas. Reveal to doctor of your recent travel history, including transit.

For more information, please visit

- Travel Health Service website at <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/>
- Centre for Health Protection thematic website at http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/26511.html

Centre for Health Protection

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