

Q&A about SARS

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a new sickness that makes it hard to breathe. You may see people wearing masks like what your doctor or dentist wears. This is to stop them from breathing in the SARS germs so that they won't get sick.

Whenever there is a new sickness, kids and adults can get scared. One way to feel less scared is to learn more about the sickness. After reading this, you may want to talk about SARS with your parent or guardian, teacher, or doctor. Because SARS is so new, we're learning more about it every day.

What's it like when you get SARS?

SARS usually begins with a fever. There can also be chills, headache, diarrhea, and just feeling lousy. After a few days, SARS patients may get a cough that can interfere with breathing. Some may need machines to help them breathe.

[insert graphic of thermometer w/ 100.4 °F (or 38 °C) + someone coughing]

What causes SARS?

The germ that causes SARS is a **virus**. There are many types of viruses, which cause many types of sickness, from simply annoying to very dangerous. If you've had a cold, then you've already had a virus.

How long does it take for someone exposed to the SARS germs become sick?

It takes 2 to 10 days.

How sick can people with SARS get?

Some viruses, like chicken pox, can make people very sick if left untreated. It seems that SARS generally can be controlled with proper medication. Some patients may have trouble breathing, like pneumonia, and may need breathing machines.

Is there a test that can tell if someone has SARS?

Not yet, but several companies and governments are developing them.

Is there a drug to prevent or cure SARS?

The usual drugs that fight viruses don't seem to work against the SARS virus. A mix of drugs, or a drug not yet developed, may one day prevent or cure SARS.

How is SARS spread?

Like many viruses, it seems that SARS spreads by close contact. When someone with SARS sneezes or coughs, they release the virus in very small droplets. You can get the virus if you touch something that has these droplets, and then you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

It's unknown how "catchy" (or **contagious**) the virus is through the air in a building or outside. Right now, doctors think it's less contagious than the flu.

[insert graphic/photo of people in street wearing surgical masks]

If nobody knows how catchy the SARS virus is, why do some people wear masks?

With any new disease, the more people don't know, the more scared they usually are. Wearing a mask may not help most people, but it can't hurt. Right now, masks are recommended only for doctors and nurses, emergency workers (police, fire fighters, and paramedics), and for family members of someone with SARS.

Is SARS in a lot of countries?

Right now, Southeast Asia has the most SARS cases. Toronto, Canada also has several people with SARS. Many countries have just a few people with SARS. Infected travelers (like plane or boat passengers) can quickly spread SARS from one country to another, so this may change.

[insert map of SE Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Hanoi, Singapore) OR just a world map in general]

What are people doing to prevent SARS from spreading?

First, anyone who might have SARS should see their doctor. After an examination, the doctor may decide to keep them in their own hospital room for up to 2 weeks.

Hospitals (and countries, too) with SARS patients should care for them in areas separate from everyone else. They should also let people know about the SARS patients, so that people can choose whether or not to go there.

What can I do to prevent getting SARS?

You've taken the first step by reading this pamphlet to learn more about SARS. You should also do the following:

- Wash your hands a lot with soap and hot water
- Don't touch things that you know people have coughed or sneezed on
- Don't go to places that have many SARS cases