



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...MERS CoV

What is MERS CoV?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory illness. MERS is caused by a coronavirus called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). MERS-CoV was first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia. It is also known as novel coronavirus.

It is uncertain where the virus came from. However, it is likely that it came from an animal source. In addition to humans, MERS-CoV has been found in camels in Qatar and a bat in Saudi Arabia. Camels in a few other countries have also tested positive for antibodies to MERS-CoV, indicating they were previously infected with MERS-CoV or a closely related virus. However, we don't know whether camels are the source of the virus. More information is needed to identify the possible role that camels, bats, and other animals may play in the transmission of MERS-CoV.

What are the symptoms of MERS-CoV?

Most people who are infected with MERS-CoV develop respiratory illness with the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Some people develop severe acute respiratory illness requiring hospitalization, and intubation.

Symptoms usually start about 2-14 days after being exposed.

Who is at risk for getting MERS-CoV?

MERS-CoV has been shown to spread between people who are in close contact. A close contact is defined as a) any person who provided care for the patient,

including a healthcare worker or family member, or had similarly close physical contact; or b) any person who stayed at the same place (e.g. lived with, visited) as the patient while the patient was ill. Clusters of cases in several countries are being investigated.

How do I know if I have MERS-CoV?

In order to know if someone with respiratory symptoms has MERS-CoV, laboratory testing must be done. Laboratory tests for MERS-CoV are available at state health departments, CDC, and some international labs. Otherwise, MERS-CoV tests are not routinely available.

How is MERS-CoV treated?

There are no specific treatments recommended at this time for illnesses caused by MERS-CoV. Medical care, such as IV fluids and supplemental oxygen, may be needed to support patients during this illness.

How is MERS-CoV prevented?

CDC advises that people follow these tips to help prevent respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/faq.html> or the ISDH influenza website located at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/25796.htm>.

This page was last reviewed May 2, 2014.