

# MIDDLE EAST RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

(Formerly known as Severe Respiratory Disease associated with Novel Coronavirus)

## Causative agent

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which include viruses that may cause mild illness like common cold as well as severe illness like severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in humans. There are 3 main subgroups of coronaviruses: alpha ( $\alpha$ ), beta ( $\beta$ ) and gamma ( $\gamma$ ). Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), formerly known as novel coronavirus (NCoV), is a beta coronavirus which has not been identified in humans before and is different from any coronaviruses (including SARS-coronavirus) that have been found in humans or animals.

## Clinical features

Infected persons can present with acute serious respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Most patients developed pneumonia. Many also had gastrointestinal symptoms or kidney failure. In people with immune deficiencies, the disease may have atypical presentation such as diarrhoea.

## Modes of transmission

There is still uncertainty at the moment.

Coronaviruses are typically spread like other respiratory infections such as influenza. Based on the current limited information, MERS-CoV may be spread from person-to-person through close contact.

## Incubation period

Up to 14 days.

## Management

There is currently no specific treatment for the disease. Treatment is supportive.

## Prevention

Wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if respiratory symptoms develop.

### Personal hygiene

- Keep hands clean
  - Wash hands frequently with liquid soap and water especially after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose
  - Rub hands with 70 – 80% alcohol-based handrub if not visibly soiled
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth before washing hands
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge in a lidded rubbish bin
- Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, and do not smoke

### Environmental hygiene

Though coronaviruses may survive for some time in the environment, they are easily destroyed by most detergents and cleaning agents. It is important to:

- Maintain good ventilation

- Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation
- Keep our home clean – clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, furniture, commonly shared items and floor at least once daily by using appropriate disinfectant. For non-metallic surface, clean with diluted household bleach (mixing 10ml of bleach containing 5.25% hypochlorite solution with 990ml of water), wait until dry and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol

### **Travel health advice**

Avoid direct contact with animals, birds or poultry. As a general precautionary measure, travellers should also adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding undercooked meat and vegetable, unpeeled fruits, or unsafe water.

If feeling unwell, such as having fever, sore throat, muscle pain or cough, put on a surgical mask and seek medical attention immediately;

- Before departure: postpone your trip until recovery
- While overseas: inform hotel staff or tour leader
- After returning home: during medical consultation, inform doctor of recent travel history

### Special note for people planning to travel for pilgrimage

Pilgrims with pre-existing major medical conditions (e.g. chronic diseases such as diabetes, chronic lung disease, immunodeficiency) can increase the likelihood of illness, including MERS-CoV infection, during travel; thus, pilgrims should consult a health care provider before travelling to review the risk and assess whether making the pilgrimage is advisable.

*(Source: Centre for Health Protection)*

## 中東呼吸綜合症

( 前稱「新型冠狀病毒致嚴重呼吸系統病」 )

### 病原體

冠狀病毒可分為很多種類，其中包括可能導致輕微疾病的病毒如傷風，它亦可引致嚴重的疾病，如嚴重急性呼吸系統綜合症（沙士）。冠狀病毒有三種主要類別，包括：alpha ( $\alpha$ ), beta ( $\beta$ ) 和 gamma ( $\gamma$ )。而中東呼吸綜合症冠狀病毒（前稱新型冠狀病毒）屬於 beta 類別，以往從未在人類中發現，亦跟曾在人類或動物所發現的冠狀病毒（包括引致「沙士」的冠狀病毒）不同。

### 病徵

患者可出現急性嚴重呼吸系統疾病，病徵包括發燒、咳嗽、呼吸急促和困難。多數患者患有肺炎。很多病人還有腸胃方面的症狀或出現腎臟衰竭。免疫力較弱的患者，可出現非典型病徵，例如腹瀉。

### 傳播途徑

現時仍未確定。

一般冠狀病毒的傳播途徑，與其他呼吸道感染例如流感相似。根據目前所掌握的有限資料顯示，中東呼吸綜合症冠狀病毒可能會經由緊密接觸而出現人傳人的情況。

### 潛伏期

可達 14 天。

### 治理方法

現時並未有針對性治療此病的方法，主要為支援性治療。

### 預防方法

如出現呼吸道感染病徵時，應佩戴口罩，並盡快求診。

#### 個人衛生

- 保持雙手清潔
  - 經常用梘液和清水洗手，尤其是打噴嚏、咳嗽或清潔鼻子後
  - 如雙手沒有明顯的污垢時，可用含 70 – 80% 酒精搓手液清潔雙手
  - 如要觸摸眼睛、鼻子和嘴巴，應先洗手
- 打噴嚏或咳嗽時應用紙巾掩著口鼻，將染污的紙巾妥善棄置於有蓋垃圾箱內
- 保持均衡飲食、恆常運動、充足休息，和不要吸煙，以建立良好身體抵抗力

#### 環境衛生

雖然冠狀病毒可能會在環境存活一段時間，但一般清潔劑都能輕易地消滅此病毒。我們切記要：

- 保持空氣流通
- 避免前往人多擠迫、空氣欠流通的地方
- 保持家居清潔。應每天徹底清潔和消毒經常接觸的表面、傢具、共用物品和地板最少一次。可使用稀釋家用漂白水 (以 10 毫升次氯酸鈉的濃度為 5.25% 的漂白水混和於 990 毫升清水內) 清洗非金屬表面，待乾後再用清水過淨，或用 70% 火酒消毒金屬表面

### **旅遊健康建議**

避免直接接觸動物、雀鳥或家禽。作為一般預防措施，旅客亦應注意食物安全及衛生，例如避免進食未熟透的肉類和蔬菜、未去皮的水果，以及飲用不潔的水。

如感到不適，例如出現發燒、喉嚨痛、肌肉疼痛或咳嗽，應佩戴口罩，盡快求醫；

- 出發前：延遲行程，直至痊癒
- 在海外：告知酒店工作人員或領隊
- 返港後：求診時，告知醫生近期的旅遊紀錄

### **朝覲人士的建議**

患有長期病患，如糖尿病、慢性肺病或免疫系統疾病的人士，朝覲可能增加感染中東呼吸綜合症的機會，因此出發前，應諮詢醫生的意見，評估風險以了解此旅程是否合適。

( 資料來源：衛生防護中心 )