

## **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Information Sheet**

### **What is SARS?**

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a potentially severe form of pneumonia. The main symptoms are:

- A fever over 38.0 degrees Celsius or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Respiratory problems, including a dry cough, difficulty breathing, or shortness of breath.

There may also be muscle aches and pains, severe fatigue, a severe headache, loss of appetite, confusion, a rash, and/or diarrhea.

### **How is SARS spread?**

It is believed that the SARS virus is present in the respiratory droplets of an infected person. Thus, the SARS virus can be spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can also spread during close face-to-face contact with a SARS-infected person (within 1 metre), or through direct contact with the respiratory secretions of an infected person.

### **Who is at risk of developing this illness?**

Individuals at risk of developing SARS are:

- Those who have cared for, lived with, had face-to-face contact (within 1 meter) with someone ill with this infection, or had contact with the respiratory secretions of someone ill with this infection
- Individuals who have visited or worked at a defined center that is associated with a cluster of cases, within 10 days of symptoms starting.
- Those who have travelled to Asia, particularly the People's Republic of China including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Taiwan, within 10 days of symptoms starting

### **How can this illness be prevented?**

Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of illness. You should also avoid:

- direct face-to-face contact with someone ill with this disease, and
- touching tissues and other articles used by someone ill with this disease.

### **What to do?**

If you or someone in your family develops the symptoms of SARS, seek medical advice as soon as possible. Please be sure to call ahead to your doctor or to the hospital's emergency room, so that necessary preparations can be made. For further information, or to discuss your concerns, please call:

- York Region Health Services **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653
- your personal physician.

For after-hours service, or service in languages other than English, call **Telehealth Ontario** at **1-866-797-0000**.

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