

# Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

## What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is an infection that can develop into a severe, and in some cases, deadly form of pneumonia. SARS is caused by a coronavirus that is thought to have originated in China in 2002. There have been no known cases of SARS in humans since 2004.

## What are the symptoms of SARS?

Symptoms of SARS include: fever (over 38°C or 100.4°F), cough, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Other symptoms of SARS may include muscle aches, headache, sore throat, weakness and diarrhea.

In severe cases of SARS, breathing becomes more difficult and people may require oxygen to help them breathe or they may need breathing support with machines in a hospital.

Symptoms of SARS develop from two to ten days after exposure to the virus, but usually five days afterwards.

## How does SARS spread?

SARS is thought to have originally been spread to humans by contact with infected wild animals. SARS can spread through the air by coughing or sneezing (droplet spread). Droplets then enter another person's eyes, nose or mouth and cause infection. The virus can also be spread when your hands come in contact with items soiled by respiratory droplets from an infected person and you touch or rub your eyes, nose or mouth.

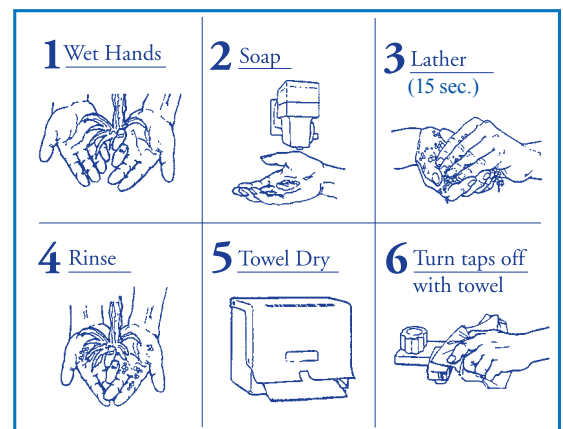
It appears that people with SARS are not contagious until they develop symptoms. People with SARS are considered infectious for about 21 days.

Close contacts of SARS patients such as household members and health care workers are at increased risk for SARS.

## How is SARS prevented?

SARS can be prevented through the following measures:

- Practising good hygiene. This is the most effective way to stop the spread of SARS. Wash with soap and water, using the six-step method in the diagram, or clean hands with an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Wearing masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) if you are at risk of being exposed to the virus.
- Disinfecting items that have come in contact with an infected person, and using disposable items wherever possible



There is no vaccine for SARS.

For further information, please call:  
**York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**  
**TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**



## What is the treatment for SARS?

The best treatment for SARS is still unknown. Treatment may include antiviral medications, antibiotics, steroids, oxygen or breathing support with machines in a hospital.

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