

MIDDLE EAST RESPIRATORY SYNDROME CORONAVIRUS (MERS-CoV)

What is MERS-CoV?

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is a virus that causes a serious lung infection. It was first found in Saudi Arabia in 2012. MERS is part of the coronavirus family, which also includes viruses that cause the common cold, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and COVID-19.

MERS-CoV mostly affects people in or near the Middle East, but cases have been reported in other countries due to travel.

What are the symptoms of MERS-CoV?

Symptoms usually appear two to 14 days after exposure and can range from mild to severe. Common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, pneumonia in many cases, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting in some cases.

Severe cases may lead to breathing failure, kidney failure or death.

Older adults and people with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease and cancer are at higher risk of serious illness.

How does MERS-CoV spread?

MERS-CoV spreads:

1. From animals to people, especially through contact with dromedary camels such as touching, drinking raw camel milk or eating undercooked camel meat
2. From person to person, mainly in healthcare settings or through close contact with someone who is infected

There is no evidence of widespread community transmission outside healthcare settings.

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How can MERS-CoV be prevented?

There is **no vaccine** for MERS-CoV yet. To reduce your risk:

- Wash your hands often, especially after touching animals
- Avoid contact with sick animals, especially camels
- Do not drink raw camel milk, or eat undercooked meat
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Use proper infection control in healthcare settings

If you are traveling to areas where MERS-CoV is found, practice good hand hygiene, avoid animal markets and farms and cook meat thoroughly.

How is MERS-CoV treated?

There is **no specific antiviral treatment** for MERS-CoV. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms, supporting breathing with oxygen or ventilators and managing complications like pneumonia or kidney failure. Hospital care may be needed for individuals who are severely ill.

See your doctor as soon as possible if you think you may have MERS.