

April 14, 2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

What is SARS?

SARS stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, and is a severe form of pneumonia, accompanied by a fever. A small number of people with SARS can become severely ill.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

The symptoms of SARS usually begin within ten days after direct contact with a SARS patient. They include a fever of more than 38° celsius or 100.4° fahrenheit and/or any of the following:

- Muscle aches and pains
- Severe fatigue
- A severe headache
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath.

How do I get SARS?

It is believed the illness is spread from coughing and sneezing or from direct face-to-face contact with a person who has SARS. Race or ethnic background are not factors in the development or spread of SARS.

How is SARS treated?

Patients with SARS are being treated in hospital with antibiotics and antiviral agents and are receiving supportive care. SARS patients are kept in isolation rooms and hospital staff are using appropriate precautions.

Who should be isolated or quarantined at home?

Only people who have been exposed to SARS need to be isolated or quarantined at home, *even if they are not displaying symptoms*. Home isolation or quarantine starts from the first day after a person is exposed to SARS and ends after ten days. Isolation or quarantine at home is required if one of the following applies to you:

- direct contact with a person known to have SARS ; or
- visited Highland Funeral Home and Cremation Centre at 3280 Sheppard Avenue East, Toronto between 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 3

Call Toronto Public Health for information if you:

- visited Scarborough Hospital, Grace Division during the period March 16 to March 26; or
- visited York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill during the period March 16 to March 28; or
- visited Brookside/Hilltop Retirement Residence in Richmond Hill during the period of March 26 to March 29.

What should I know about quarantine or home isolation?

- In Toronto, call the Toronto Public Health SARS Hotline at 416-338-7600 if you think you have been exposed to SARS and for information and assistance.
- The incubation period for SARS is ten days. Staying at home and limiting your exposure to others is the best way to control the spread of SARS to family, friends and co-workers. If you do not develop symptoms within the ten-day period, you can end your quarantine.

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What do I do if I've travelled to China, Hong Kong, Singapore or Vietnam (city of Hanoi)?

Monitor your health for SARS symptoms for ten days upon return to Canada. Isolation or quarantine at home is not necessary if you are feeling well. If you develop fever and/or any SARS symptoms you should put yourself in home isolation. Toronto residents should call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 and call your doctor, right away.

What should I do when in home isolation or quarantine?

Take the following precautions:

- Remain at home, do not leave your house and do not have anyone visit you at home. Family or household members do not have to be isolated or quarantined at home, unless a member of the household is diagnosed with SARS.
- Wear a mask when you are in the same room with another member of your household.
- Change your mask as directed. Family or household members do not have to wear a mask.
- Do not share personal items, such as towels, drinking cups or cutlery.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Sleep in separate rooms.
- Measure your temperature with your own thermometer twice a day over the ten-day period. Do not share thermometers with other members of your household.
- If anyone in the household develops fever (more than 38° C or 100.4° F), muscle aches and pains, severe fatigue, dry cough, shortness of breath, severe headache, or is feeling unwell, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

Should household members of people who are in home isolation or quarantine also stay home from work, day care or school?

No. Household or family members of people who are quarantined at home do not need to stay home. Only if the person in home isolation or quarantine develops signs of SARS will the entire household be required to stay home.

Should visitors go into private homes of people who are in home isolation or quarantine?

No. If someone has been isolated at home, they have been instructed not to receive visitors.

For more information on SARS:

For general information about SARS call InfoLine

1-888-668-4636 (TTY: 1-800-387-5559)

If you have symptoms call Telehealth Ontario

1-866-797-0000 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007)

or

Toronto Public Health SARS Hotline at 416-338-7600

York Region Health Services at 1-800-361-5653

Additional information is available on the following web sites. Information is updated frequently.

www.health.gov.on.ca

www.toronto.ca

www.sars.gc.ca

www.region.york.on.ca