

SARS: Facts You Should Know

(NAPS)—Earlier this year, a new disease called SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) emerged first in China and then spread to other parts of the world, including the United States and Canada. Scientists turned their attention to studying the disease. They learned a lot very quickly. Here are important facts that have emerged about SARS.

What is SARS?

SARS is a respiratory illness that scientists at CDC and around the world believe is caused by a new virus in a family of viruses called "coronavirus."

What are its symptoms?

Illness generally begins with a fever of more than 100.4 degrees, and may be followed by a headache, general discomfort, and body aches. After two to seven days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough and have trouble breathing.

How is it spread?

SARS seems to be spread through close contact. Most cases have occurred among people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS. The disease also may be spread by touching people or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Scientists are working to discover other ways SARS may be spread.

How can I protect myself?

- CDC issues specific travel advice on its Web site, but the basic rule is: Don't travel to areas where SARS is spreading. People who must travel to such areas should take preventive precautions such as avoiding particular settings or situations.

- Wash your hands. As with



Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to avoid infectious illness.

many infectious diseases, washing your hands often with soap and water is important to preventing illness. If you don't have soap and water, use alcohol-based hand rubs.

- Practice good personal hygiene. Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. If necessary, wash your hands before touching them.

Shun viruses, not people

Remember that preventing the spread of the disease means taking steps against viruses, not people.

"Diseases are caused by viruses. There are sensible and important things that can be done to prevent the spread of disease. As citizens of the global community, we need to respond in the most constructive and supportive way possible, because we are all in this together," says Dr. Julie Gerberding, CDC director.

For more information about SARS and other infectious diseases or health issues, visit www.cdc.gov.