

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Information Regarding People Arriving from a SARS Affected Area

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This document has been developed to provide information regarding the public health management of people who have recently arrived from a SARS-affected area. As more information about the cause, communicability and transmission of this illness becomes available, the information provided in this document may change.

The material provided in this document has been reviewed by Federal, Provincial, Territorial and local public health officials across Canada. Health Canada would like to acknowledge the significant and ongoing contributions of all participating stakeholders.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS): Information Regarding People Arriving from a SARS Affected Area

Current Situation:

Health Canada continues to monitor reports of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) within Canada and globally. Countries currently reporting SARS can be obtained through the World Health Organization at:

http://www.who.int/csr/sarsareas/2003_04_16/en/.

To date SARS cases in Canada have been reported in returning Canadian travelers from Asian SARS affected areas and through exposure to specific transmission settings in Canada such as households, hospitals and specific community settings. Information on the current SARS situation in Canada can be obtained at: <http://www.sars.gc.ca>

SARS Symptoms, Outcomes and Transmission:

SARS usually begins with symptoms including headache, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of discomfort, accompanied by or followed by fever [measured temperature greater than 38.0°C (100.4°F)]. The fever may be present for a few days before respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing start to appear. In some cases, the respiratory symptoms become increasingly severe, and people require oxygen support and mechanical ventilation. In Canada, older people (i.e., over 70 years) and those with medical problems seem to be at higher risk of developing the serious form of this illness and ultimately at higher risk of death. The majority of cases are recovering with supportive care in the hospital or home setting.

People who do not have any symptoms are not considered to be capable of spreading this disease. People living in the same household or who have had other close contact with well (asymptomatic) individuals, therefore, are also not considered to be potential spreaders of this disease.

Individual protective measures:

Currently there is no vaccine for SARS or drugs that can be taken to prevent this illness. People are strongly encouraged to abide by the current Canadian travel advisory and to defer all travel to affected areas in Asia, in order to reduce their risk of coming into contact with an unidentified SARS case.

In Canadian communities where cases have occurred, individuals can protect themselves by avoiding close contact with known cases or people under

quarantine, staying out of the designated settings (e.g. hospitals) where there is considered to be a risk of transmission, which includes respecting visitor restriction policies in affected health care sites. The use of masks is not deemed necessary outside of specific settings where SARS cases or ill contacts are being looked after.

The general public are encouraged to carry on with their normal daily activities.

Preventing Spread:

Canada has issued travel advisories regarding travel to areas with SARS outbreaks (see www.sars.gc.ca). Information has also been made available for people who choose to travel to affected areas despite the advisories (see “SARS: *Interim Information for Travellers Leaving Canada*”, on the website). In general, travellers who become ill with SARS symptoms while in an affected area in Asia have been advised to follow the isolation procedures in place in that country, and not to travel while sick with SARS.

The following public health measures have been put in place to prevent the importation of SARS into Canada from SARS-affected areas outside of Canada:

Passengers en route to Canada from Affected areas (outside Canada)

Health Canada has reminded all airline carriers flying into Canada from SARS affected areas that International Health Regulations and Canadian Quarantine Regulations require all captains of conveyances (airplanes, ships, etc.) to inform authorities of sick passengers on board including those with symptoms of SARS. Health Canada has also asked all airline carriers with service from SARS affected areas to assist with dissemination of public health messages and collect contact tracing information.

Airline crews on all direct flights from Asia into Canada are now providing public health information in-flight. **Health Alert Notices** (Yellow Cards) and Health Canada’s **Traveller Contact Information Form** (passenger contact information for the next 14 days) are being distributed on these flights. All passengers are required to complete the **Traveller Contact Information Form**, and the forms will be collected as the traveller disembarks the plane.

The Health Alert Notices (Yellow Cards) contain important SARS-related public health messages, including a description of SARS symptoms and specific instructions for a traveller who develops these symptoms en route from SARS-affected areas in Asia OR develops the symptoms following deplaning for a subsequent 10-day period. (see “Health Alert Notices” on www.sars.gc.ca, for additional details)

If Health Canada is notified of an ill passenger who is suspected of having SARS en route to Vancouver, Toronto (Pearson) or Montreal (Dorval) airports, a Quarantine Officer will meet the plane on arrival and ensure that public health measures are implemented for all passengers, (both ill and well).

Upon Arrival

Currently on the ground at Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto (Pearson), Ottawa, Montreal (Dorval and Mirabel), Quebec City, Halifax, and St John's airports:

- Health Alert Posters and accompanying Health Alert Notices (Yellow Cards) are in place at strategic locations in terminals so that arriving international travellers (other than from the U.S.) will see the public health messages and pick up a Health Alert Notice for their information.

Many provinces, territories and local public health authorities have put additional public health messages in place based on the current risk of this disease in their communities.

Summary:

All of these measures have been implemented in response to the early recognition of SARS cases in Canada. While cases of SARS continue to be reported in returning Canadian travellers from SARS affected areas in Asia, the number of cases has been very low, and the number of people that these individuals have subsequently infected has also been low, due to the public health measures implemented in Canada and the high level of awareness regarding this disease. Even with the extensive follow up of domestic and international flights bound for Canada, on which a passenger with SARS was identified, no transmission of this disease to other passengers has been documented.

Based on the current knowledge of this new disease, as long as a person returning from one of the affected areas does not have SARS symptoms OR has not had known contact with a SARS case, Health Canada does not recommend that they restrict their activities. These individuals may go to school or work and need not be placed in quarantine for the purposes of disease control.

Canadian public health authorities are closely monitoring this outbreak and are actively implementing public health measures in order to protect the health of the general public against this disease. Public health measures are continually being reviewed and adjusted as new information from national and international sources becomes available regarding this disease.

For more information:

- For general information on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), including international travel-related information, visit the Health Canada website at: www.sars.gc.ca or phone 1-800-454-8302.