

**Infection Control Guidance for Air Flight Cabin Crew Staff**  
**SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)**

*The following fact sheet has been developed to assist airline cabin crew with the assessment of potential cases of SARS and provide guidelines to prevent transmission of the disease during flight. Please be advised that as more information about the cause of this illness becomes available, the information provided below may change.*

**Suspect Case of SARS:**

A person with:

- Fever (over 38 degrees Celsius)

**And**

- One or more respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing

**And**

One or more of the following:

- Close contact\* within 10 days of onset of symptoms with a probable case
- People who recently traveled to the following countries/cities: China (Guangdong province and Hong Kong), Singapore and Vietnam (City of Hanoi).

**And**

- No other known cause of current illness

\*Close contact means having cared for, lived with or had face-to-face (within 1 metre) contact with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and/or body fluids of a person with SARS.

**In-flight Protocol:**

- 1 Any passenger who appears to have a fever and respiratory symptoms such as coughing or difficulty breathing, should be interviewed by a member of the in-flight cabin crew to obtain information about their recent travel history and/or possible contact with a person who has been diagnosed with SARS. The interview should be conducted in private.
- 2 Should the passenger have symptoms as described above, he/she should be treated as a suspect case of SARS, and the infection control measures listed below should be followed.
- 3 Inform the pilot of the aircraft or his/her representative of the suspect SARS case. He/she will inform the airline and the airport of designation that they have a suspect case of SARS aboard.
- 4 The airport health authority/Port Authority will determine the course of action when the flight arrives at its destination.
- 5 Where possible, move the passenger to the back of the plane. Designate one toilet facility for the use of the sick passenger only. Where possible, minimize the amount of passengers in contact with the suspect case of SARS.

## **Infection Control Measures:**

### **Hand washing is the most important hygiene measure in preventing the spread of infection**

- Hands must be washed:
  - After any direct contact with a sick passenger,
  - Before contact with the next passenger,
  - After contact with body fluids, secretions and excretions, such as saliva,
  - After contact with items known or considered likely to be in touch with respiratory secretions (e.g. tissues, napkins, etc.)
- Instruct the passenger believed to be a suspect case in proper hand washing procedures.
- Plain soap may be used for routine hand washing.
- Waterless antiseptic hand rinses should be available as an alternative to hand washing.
- When there is visible soiling, hands should be washed with soap and water before using waterless antiseptic hand rinses. If soap and water are unavailable, cleanse hands first with detergent-containing towelettes.

### **Protective Masks**

- Passengers believed to be suspect cases should wear a surgical mask. Masks should be changed if they become moist, hard to breath in, physically damaged or visibly soiled.
- Airline cabin crew in close contact with the passenger should wear an N-95 mask or equivalent while providing services to the passengers they believe may be a suspect case.
- For more information on masks please visit [www.sars.gc.ca](http://www.sars.gc.ca)

### **Cleaning Procedures**

As major cleaning cannot be undertaken until the aircraft safely arrives at their destination, cabin crew should be supplied with materials to use to clean any surfaces in contact with respiratory secretions of the suspect case of SARS.

- Soiled linen: Linen, such as pillows or blankets, should be transported in leak resistant, closed laundry bags.
- Waste: Dispose of all waste in a plastic garbage bag and seal. Double bagging of waste is not necessary. Appropriate hand washing is required after handling waste such as tissues or napkins.
- Airsickness containers: Used containers should be stored during the flight in the toilet compartment. They should be removed from the aircraft by the toilet servicing team and disposed of along with the aircraft toilet wastes.
- Disinfect or destroy magazines, newspapers and toys if there is any possibility that they may have been in contact with the suspects case of SARS.

*For general information on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), please see “Fact Sheet on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)”, or visit the Health Canada website at: [www.sars.gc.ca](http://www.sars.gc.ca) or phone 1-800-454-8302*