

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SARS

BC and Canada have made great progress in containing, treating and researching SARS, but unfortunately it will be with us all for some time to come. It's in our common interest to continue the battle against SARS, working co-operatively with partners around the world to prevent its spread and ultimately to find a cure.

## We're Making Progress

To date, there have been no deaths from SARS in BC. Just four people in BC have been identified as probable SARS cases, and two of them have now fully recovered. There has been no transmission at the community level in BC, and there is no evidence of transmission by individuals who do not show symptoms, meaning the risk of contracting SARS is extremely low for British Columbians.

This has only been possible because British Columbians and all Canadians have done such a great job of listening to health care professionals and acting on their advice. Our health care professionals have done an outstanding job of identifying, notifying and isolating people at risk and treating SARS patients. Together, we have demonstrated to the world that we can contain SARS when we take reasonable precautions, listen to our health officials, and follow isolation procedures as appropriate.

## We're Searching For Solutions

- We have the knowledge and technology to fight SARS. BC was the first, globally, to successfully uncover the genetic code – a key stepping stone in finding a vaccine and accurately diagnosing SARS.
- The BC government is committed to accelerating the search for a vaccine with a recent \$2.6 million investment. It typically can take three to five years to develop a vaccine. We want to reduce that time by half.
- The world is working together. SARS has tested and improved our capacity to co-operate, communicate and respond to pandemics globally. And in early June the world's scientists will meet in Geneva to share their knowledge and work towards a cure.

## But There's More We Can Do

### Know the symptoms

- Symptoms are fever, dry cough and shortness of breath or breathing difficulties. To be at risk of SARS you need to have had close contact with a known SARS case or have travelled to an affected area. (Contact Health Canada for latest advisories.)

### Take reasonable precautions

- Wash your hands. Hand-washing is the single most important procedure for preventing infections such as SARS. Washing with plain soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds is the best prevention. Waterless (alcohol-based) cleansers are also effective.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- Promptly dispose of any tissues or other articles that come into contact with fluid from your nose, mouth, throat or eyes.
- Continue to follow instructions from health professionals.
- The risk of transmitting SARS in public is extremely low. There is no reason for returning travellers who do not show any symptoms to stay in quarantine.

### Travel safely

- Check travel advisories before you go.
- Look for the latest Health Canada information at airports and on airplanes.
- Airline passengers in affected areas are being screened before they board aircraft to minimize the risk of an infectious person being on board an airplane.
- Flight crews are monitoring passengers for symptoms to ensure anyone who appears ill will be isolated by a quarantine officer.
- There has been no evidence of any transmission attributed to airport contact.
- New technologies at airports are being introduced by the government to screen for SARS.

### Learn more about SARS and stay informed

- For the latest information on SARS in BC, visit [www.healthplanning.gov.bc.ca/pho/sars.html](http://www.healthplanning.gov.bc.ca/pho/sars.html) or the BC Centre for Disease Control Website, [www.bccdc.org](http://www.bccdc.org)
- For the latest Canadian information and global travel advisories, contact Health Canada at [www.sars.gc.ca](http://www.sars.gc.ca) or 1-800-454-8302
- For world SARS information, contact the World Health Organization at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

If you are concerned that you have symptoms of SARS or may have been exposed, call the BC NurseLine at 1-866-215-4700 before going to a hospital or clinic.



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