

March 27, 2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Who should be quarantined?

The following people should be quarantined:

- **Anyone who visited the Scarborough Hospital - Grace Division on or after March 16, and did not wear a protective mask.** March 16 is the first day that health care workers who may have been ill with SARS worked in the hospital, potentially exposing patients and visitors to the illness.
- **Individuals who have come into close contact with a person with SARS and did not wear a protective mask.** Close contact means having cared for, lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with SARS.

These individuals should stay at home for 10 days in a row **even if they are experiencing no symptoms**. 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.

What about travellers?

- **Individuals who have travelled to China (Guangdong Province), Hong Kong, Singapore, or Vietnam (the city of Hanoi), should monitor for symptoms for 10 days after returning. If you experience symptoms within this time period, isolate yourself and call Toronto Public Health immediately for assessment. If you are assessed with SARS, your family will be quarantined for 10 days.**

Only a person who has had unprotected exposure (not wearing a mask) to an individual with SARS, or who has travelled to the affected regions and is experiencing symptoms within 10 days, should be quarantined. **Other family members can continue with their normal routines.**

Why do I have to stay home for 10 days?

The incubation period for SARS is 10 days. If you do not develop symptoms within 10 days from your last exposure to a person with SARS, you can end your quarantine.

What should I do when I am in quarantine?

To protect your health, and the health of others, the following precautions are necessary:

- Remain at home in isolation for 10 days after your last exposure. Do not leave your house, and do not have anyone visit you at home. Family members do not have to be quarantined, 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 twice a day. Family 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 10-day period.
- If anyone in the household develops fever (over 38°C/ 100.4 °F), respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing), headache, or is feeling unwell, call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

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Should family members of healthy people who are in isolation stay home from work, day care or school (eg. Children of Scarborough Hospital Grace Division employees)?

No, family members of healthy people who are quarantined do not need to stay home because there is no risk they can transmit SARS. If the person in quarantine develops signs of SARS, their entire household will be quarantined.

Should workers who go into private homes in the Scarborough area be concerned?

No, the risk of contracting SARS is extremely low for the general public. If someone has been isolated at home, they have been instructed not to receive visitors.

What are health authorities doing to contain the spread of this outbreak?

- monitoring the status of all probable, suspect, and indeterminate cases of SARS.
- calling contacts of SARS cases to monitor for symptoms of SARS.
- supplying masks for each individual who is isolated at home.
- providing thermometers to household contacts of cases of SARS to monitor their temperature.
- operating hotlines to answer questions or concerns regarding SARS.

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?

SARS is a severe form of pneumonia, accompanied by a fever. It is not to be confused with the common cold. It is not yet known what organism (germ) is causing the infection. Individuals who have had direct contact with a SARS patient, or have travelled to China (Guangdong Province), Hong Kong, Singapore, or Vietnam (the city of Hanoi), should watch for the following symptoms:

- sudden onset of fever (greater than 38 °C or 100.4 °F),

AND

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

How is SARS spread?

It is believed the illness is spread via droplets from coughing and sneezing, or from direct face-to-face contact with an ill person.

How is SARS treated?

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

What should I do if I experience symptoms?

Individuals with symptoms of SARS who have travelled to the areas listed above, or those who have had contact with a SARS patient, should call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

For more information, call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600, or visit Health Canada at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca