

Preventing MERS-CoV from Spreading to Others in Homes and Communities

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This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

The Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is a new virus. Some people do not get that sick when they have this virus while others can get very sick. Seniors and people with long-term or chronic illnesses often get very sick and may even die when they have MERS-CoV. Usually people with the virus have a cough and fever and some people may need to be in a hospital.

This fact sheet is important for you to read and understand if:

- your health care provider is testing you for MERS-CoV, or you have MERS-CoV, and you do not need to stay in a hospital or
- you live with someone who is being tested for MERS-CoV or someone who has MERS-CoV.

Because MERS-CoV is a new virus, the exact way it spreads is not well understood. It is thought to be spread when a person with MERS-CoV coughs. MERS-CoV has spread from people who are sick to others with whom they have close contact. Close contact involves situations such as caring for or living with someone. MERS-CoV has also spread in hospitals among people in close contact and where proper steps were not taken. It is important to take steps so that the virus is not spread to others.

For people who have, or who may have, MERS-CoV

There are a number of things that you can do to help keep those around you from catching the virus:

- Follow the advice your health care provider has given you. Ask your health care provider if you have questions about this advice and make sure you have the information you need, including the contact information for your public health unit.
- Stay at home. Do not use public transportation or taxis. Do not go to work, school or other public places.
- Stay in a separate room away from other people in your home as much as possible and use a separate bathroom if you have one. Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g., kitchen, bathrooms). Keep the windows open in these rooms if possible.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Have tissues with you to be able to cover coughs, sneezes or to wipe or blow your nose. If you do not have a tissue with you, cover your mouth and nose with your upper sleeve or elbow, but not your hands. Put used tissues in a wastebasket lined with a plastic bag and immediately wash your hands with soap and water. When emptying the wastebasket, try not to touch used tissues.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for a minimum of 15 seconds. Dry your hands with a paper towel, or with your own cloth towel that no one else shares. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available and if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Limit the number of visitors in your home. Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- When you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of two metres from others and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth. If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.
- If you must leave your house to see a health care provider, wear a mask over your nose and mouth when you are within two metres of other people.
- Tell all health care providers that are being tested for MERS-CoV, or that you have MERS-CoV. This includes telling paramedics if you need to take an ambulance. This will help health care providers to take steps to keep themselves and others from catching MERS-CoV.

For people who live with someone who has, or who may have, MERS-CoV

There are a number of things that people who are living with someone who has, or who may have MERS-CoV, can do to protect themselves and others:

- Have only people in the home who are essential for providing care:
 - People who are not taking care of the person who is being tested for MERS-CoV or who has MERS-CoV should live somewhere else. If this is not possible, they should stay in another room or be separated from the person as much as possible.
 - Keep seniors and people with long-term or chronic conditions away from the person (e.g., diabetes, heart, lung or kidney problems). These people can get very sick if they get MERS-CoV. Contact your public health unit if you need more information about people at home who may be at high risk.
- Wear a mask and gloves when you touch or have contact with the person's blood or body fluids. Body fluids include sweat, saliva, vomit, urine and diarrhea.
- Take the gloves and mask off right after you provide care and dispose of them in the wastebasket. Take off the gloves first and clean your hands with soap and water before taking off your mask. Clean your hands again with soap and water before touching your face or doing anything else.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, cigarettes, towels, bedding or other items with the person. After use, these items should be washed with soap or detergent and warm water. No special soap is needed.
- Clean the areas in your home that get touched a lot with regular household cleaners on a daily basis. Clean items that become dirty more often, including toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs and bedside tables.
- Wash laundry thoroughly. There is no need to separate the clothes from a person who is being tested for MERS-CoV or who has MERS-CoV from other household laundry, but you

should wear gloves when handling this laundry. Clean your hands immediately after removing your gloves with soap and water.

- The things that you use to help to care for the person can go into regular garbage bins. When emptying wastebaskets, take care to not touch used tissues, or used protective clothing such as gloves and masks. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal easier and safer. Clean your hands after emptying the wastebasket with soap and water.

If you are caring for or living with someone who has MERS-CoV, you are considered a 'MERS-CoV close contact'. Your local public health unit will give you special instructions about how to monitor your own health, what to do if you start to feel sick and how to contact them. Be sure to tell health care providers that you are a close contact of someone with MERS-CoV.

For more information

To help you to get better as quickly as possible, follow the advice that your health care provider and public health unit has given you. If you or other people in your house cannot follow these tips, talk to your health care provider and your local public health unit. For example, if you do not have masks and gloves, talk to your local public health unit to find out where you can get these items.

If you have any questions, or you start to feel sicker, contact your health care provider or public health unit. You can find your local public health unit by calling Service Ontario at 1-866-532-3161 or visiting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's public health unit locator tool at www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/PHUlocator.