



SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)

Severe acute respiratory syndrome is a viral respiratory illness caused by the SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV). It first appeared in Asia in 2002. The SARS outbreak of 2003 made it a disease to watch. While it seems SARS has subsided in its aggression, it is always best to be informed and prepared.

Spread of the Disease and Symptoms

- SARS is thought to be spread through close person-to-person contact.
- SARS is most effectively spread through respiratory droplets emitted when an infected individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may be transferred through the air when breathing close to an infected individual or by touching an area covered with the droplets.
- Once exposed, SARS may incubate in the body for 2–10 days.
- Symptoms include the following—
 - Early-onset fever (100.4°F [38°C] or more)
 - Headache and body aches
 - Diarrhea
 - A dry, nonproductive cough, which may lead to hypoxia (low oxygen levels in the blood) and may require ventilation
 - Pneumonia
- An individual with SARS may be contagious up to 10 days after the fever and respiratory symptoms have subsided.



Treatment

- There is currently no specific treatment for SARS.
- It is recommended that individuals infected with SARS be treated with the same techniques as any other severe pneumonia.

Prevention

- Always wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching anything or anyone with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and encourage others to do so.

Where to Find Additional Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—<http://www.cdc.gov/sars/about/faq.pdf>
- World Health Organization—www.who.int/csr/sars/en

Semper Paratus

Be “Always Ready.” Be informed about what might happen, make an emergency plan with your family, and build an emergency supply kit good for at least three days.