

MEMBER ALERT

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SARS – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

The following information has been provided by the World Health Organization:

Suspect Cases

A person experiencing a high fever and coughing or breathing difficulty, who has had close contact with a SARS case, or who has travelled from an Affected Area or resides in an Affected Area, may be termed a suspect case.

To date (April 15), 144 fatalities have occurred out of 3,169 reported cases (4.5%).

Affected Areas

Toronto (Canada)
Singapore
Beijing, Guangdong, Hong Kong, Shanxi (China)
Taiwan
Vietnam

Symptoms

The incubation period for SARS is usually 2-7 days but may be as long as 10 days. The illness typically begins with a fever, which is often high (more than 38°C). It may be accompanied by a chill, cramp, headache or nausea. A few patients have reported diarrhoea. After 3-7 days, a lower respiratory phase begins with the onset of a dry or non-productive cough that may be accompanied by, or progress to, hypoxemia.

Transmission

SARS appears to be spread by close person-to-person contact involving exposure to infectious droplets and possibly by direct contact with infectious bodily fluids.

Treatments

Treatments have included antibiotics and antiviral agents such as oseltamavir or ribavarin. A combination of steroids with ribavarin or other microbials has also been used. To date, no efficacious treatment has been found.

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In view of the above information, the following precautions are advised, as a minimum:

Precautions

1. Proper medical advice in respect of a suspect case should be sought immediately.
2. All suspect cases should be hospitalized under isolation.
3. Port health authorities should be notified.
4. Crewmembers travelling from an Affected Area should be placed in quarantine for 10 days prior to joining their vessels.
5. Trips ashore to ports in Affected Areas should be strictly limited.

Members should take whatever additional precautions are necessary, according to local conditions.

Updated information on SARS can be obtained from the World Health Organization website: www.who.org

For further information, please contact the Managers.....

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