Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

1. What is Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)?

MERS is a respiratory illness that affects a person's lungs and breathing. It's caused by a virus (germ) called coronavirus. Coronaviruses are very common. Yet, the MERS coronavirus is unlike other coronaviruses found in people before because it is so new. MERS was first found to cause illness in people in Saudi Arabia in 2012.

2. How does MERS spread?

In Middle Eastern countries, MERS most likely spreads to people from an infected camel. MERS sometimes spreads between people who are in close contact with each other, such as those caring for or living with someone who is ill. Healthcare workers and household contacts of a MERS patient are most likely to become ill. Most MERS cases have occurred in the Middle Eastern countries Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Kuwait. Rarely, MERS cases have occurred in other countries among people who traveled to the Middle East or their close contacts. In May 2015, the largest cluster of MERS infections outside the Middle East occurred in South Korea.

3. What are the signs of MERS?

Some people only get mild respiratory illness. When people have severe respiratory illness these are the symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

4. How is MERS treated?

There is no treatment for MERS right now. Medical care helps ease MERS symptoms.

5. Is it safe to travel to countries where MERS has been found?

Yes. The CDC does not suggest changing travel plans to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula, or to any other country where MERS cases have occurred. For the Arabian peninsula, the current CDC travel notice is an "Alert" (Level 2), which advises travelers to follow common hygiene practices such as hand washing and limiting contact with sick people.

Key Points:

- The risk of getting sick with MERS is very low in the United States

- MERS sometimes spreads between people who are in close contact

- If you become sick after recent travel to the Arabian Peninsula, call your healthcare provider and mention your travel

For more information:

Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/MERS.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/about/index.html?s_cid=cs_1344

World Health Organization (WHO)
www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/

CDCP-ACDC-0028-01 (06/08/15)

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

6. What if you recently traveled to countries on or near the Arabian Peninsula and got sick?

If within 14 days after traveling to this area you get a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, like cough or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider and mention your recent travel. While sick, stay home from work or school and limit close contact with others to reduce the possibility of spreading the illness.

7. Are you at risk for MERS in the United States?

No. People should monitor their health for 14 days if they've had close contact with someone who has recently traveled to a country on or near the Arabian Peninsula and that person is ill (has a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, like a cough or shortness of breath).

8. What are ways to stay healthy?

Take routine precautions that help prevent respiratory illnesses. These include:
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Help young children do the same. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Limit close contact, like kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Clean surfaces that are touched often, like toys and doorknobs.

Countries where MERS has been found

Countries in the Arabian Peninsula

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Qatar
- Oman
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Yemen
- Lebanon
- Iran

Countries where MERS was found after someone traveled to the Arabian Peninsula

- United Kingdom
- France
- Tunisia
- Italy
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Greece
- Egypt
- United States of America
- Netherlands
- Algeria
- Austria
- Turkey
- Germany
- South Korea
- China

For information about cases and deaths by country, visit:
World Health Organization (WHO)
http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/

CDCP-ACDC-0028-01 (06/08/15)