

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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## Frequently Asked Questions: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

**Updated: May 12, 2014**

### **What is MERS-CoV?**

MERS-CoV is a strain of coronavirus in people associated with respiratory illness and high death rates.

### **Where does the MERS-CoV virus originate?**

Infections of the MERS-CoV virus were first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia, yet the source is unknown. Since 2012, human cases have occurred in persons residing in or traveling to other countries in the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries. Other cases have occurred outside this area, but involve persons with close contact to ill travelers from the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring countries.

### **What are the symptoms of MERS?**

Most people who were infected with MERS-CoV developed severe acute respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. About 30 percent of them die. Some people were reported as having a mild respiratory illness.

### **Does MERS-CoV spread from person to person?**

Yes, there is clear evidence that MERS-CoV spreads between people who are in close contact, such as other members in the household of an infected person. Transmission from infected patients to healthcare personnel has also been observed.

### **How many people have been diagnosed with MERS-CoV; how many have died?**

For current updates on reported cases and deaths, visit the WHO website [www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus\\_infections/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html).

### **Is MERS-CoV the same as the SARS virus?**

No, MERS-CoV is not the same coronavirus that caused SARS in 2003. However, like the SARS virus, MERS-CoV is similar to a coronavirus found in bats.

### **Is there a vaccine or treatment for MERS-CoV infection?**

There is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for MERS-CoV infection. Medical care is supportive and to help relieve symptoms. Within the U.S. government, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has the lead in developing a MERS-CoV vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is participating in an NIH-led working group to address antiviral treatment, vaccine development, and other possible treatments for MERS-CoV infection.

### **How can I protect myself and my family?**

Individuals are encouraged to take the following simple precautions to prevent most respiratory infections:

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- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.

### **What is being done to protect and prepare U.S. residents?**

As part of routine preparedness, CDC has provided MERS-CoV testing kits to the Florida Department of Health. Your health care provider can obtain more information about testing from the county health department. CDC continues to communicate with state and local health departments to keep them informed. The Florida Department of Health is working closely with health care partners and CDC to detect, control and prevent the spread of the disease in Florida.

### **Are there any travel restrictions for U.S. travelers planning trips to the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries?**

Visit the CDC's website for current [travel health warnings](#) for any country related to MERS-CoV. The CDC recommends that travelers to the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring countries use standard health precautions to prevent respiratory infection:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.

People who develop a fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after traveling from countries in the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries should see a healthcare professional and mention their recent travel.

For more information on MERS-CoV, please visit

<http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/2014/05/12/mers-cov-2/>, [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/) or [www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus\\_infections/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html).