

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)



Merlin disease code: 07982 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

[Paper case report form](#) required



Specimens for all cases must be sent to the Bureau of Public Health Laboratories

No Merlin extended data

Clinical criteria for case classification

Early illness:

- Presence of two or more of the following: fever (might be subjective), chills, rigors, myalgia, headache, diarrhea, sore throat, rhinorrhea.

Mild-to-moderate respiratory illness:

- Temperature of $>100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ ($>38^{\circ}\text{C}$)
- **And** one or more clinical findings of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing).

Severe respiratory illness:

- Meets clinical criteria of mild-to-moderate respiratory illness
- **And** one or more of the following findings:
 - Radiographic evidence of pneumonia,
 - **Or** Acute respiratory distress syndrome,
 - **Or** Autopsy findings consistent with pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome without an identifiable cause.

Laboratory criteria for case classification

Tests to detect SARS-CoV are being refined, and their performance characteristics assessed; therefore, criteria for laboratory diagnosis of SARS-CoV are changing. One or more of the following are the general criteria for laboratory confirmation of SARS-CoV:

- Detection of serum antibody to SARS-CoV by a test validated by CDC (e.g., enzyme immunoassay [EIA]),
- **Or** isolation in cell culture of SARS-CoV from a clinical specimen,
- **Or** detection of SARS-CoV RNA by a reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test validated by CDC and with subsequent confirmation in a reference laboratory (e.g., CDC).

Epidemiological criteria for case classification

Possible exposure to SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV):

One or more of the following exposures in the 10 days before onset of symptoms:

- Travel to a foreign or domestic location with documented or suspected recent transmission of SARS-CoV
- **Or** close contact with a person with mild-to-moderate or severe respiratory illness and with history of travel in the 10 days before onset of symptoms to a foreign or domestic location with documented or suspected recent transmission of SARS-CoV.

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Likely exposure to SARS-CoV:

One or more of the following exposures in the 10 days before onset of symptoms:

- Close contact with a confirmed case of SARS-CoV disease
- **Or** close contact with a person with mild-moderate or severe respiratory illness for whom a chain of transmission can be linked to a confirmed case of SARS-CoV disease in the 10 days before onset of symptoms.

Exclusion criteria

A person may be excluded as a SARS report under investigation (SARS RUI), including as a CDC-defined probable SARS-CoV case, if one or more of the following applies:

- An alternative diagnosis can explain the illness fully.
- Antibody to SARS-CoV is undetectable in a serum specimen obtained >28 days after onset of illness.
- The case was reported on the basis of contact with a person who was excluded subsequently as a case of SARS-CoV disease; then the reported case also is excluded, provided other epidemiologic or laboratory criteria are not present.

Case classification

SARS Report Under Investigation (RUI)

- Reports in persons from areas where SARS is not known to be active:
 - SARS RUI-1: Patients with severe illness compatible with SARS in groups likely to be first affected by SARS-CoV if SARS-CoV is introduced from a person without clear epidemiologic links to known cases of SARS-CoV disease or places with known ongoing transmission of SARS-CoV.
- Reports in persons from areas where SARS activity is occurring:
 - SARS RUI-2: Patients who meet the current clinical criteria for mild-to-moderate illness and the epidemiologic criteria for possible exposure (spring 2003 CDC definition for suspect cases).
 - SARS RUI-3: Patients who meet the current clinical criteria for severe illness and the epidemiologic criteria for possible exposure (spring 2003 CDC definition for probable cases).
 - SARS RUI-4: Patients who meet the clinical criteria for early or mild-moderate illness and the epidemiologic criteria for likely exposure to SARS-CoV.

SARS-CoV disease classification

Confirmed:

A clinically compatible illness (i.e., early, mild-to-moderate, or severe) in a person with laboratory criteria.

Probable:

A person who meets the clinical criteria for severe respiratory illness and the epidemiologic criteria for likely exposure to SARS-CoV.

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Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports

Not applicable.

Comments

Information regarding the current criteria for laboratory diagnosis of SARS-CoV is available at www.cdc.gov/sars/index.html.