

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

Fact Sheet: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

Updated: May 12, 2014

- MERS-CoV is a strain of coronavirus in people associated with respiratory illness and high death rates. Infections of the virus were first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- Most people who were infected with MERS-CoV developed severe acute respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- The Florida Department of Health is working closely with hospital officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect the health of all residents and visitors in Florida. Any risk to the health of the general public is very low.
- Floridians and visitors are encouraged to take simple precautions to avoid 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.
- For current updates on reported cases and deaths, visit the WHO website www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html.
- The source of MERS-CoV is unknown. Investigations are being done to learn how the initial infected people might have been exposed to the virus.
- There is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for MERS. However, federal government agencies are working to develop a vaccine.

Florida Department of Health

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- As part of routine preparedness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (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 local health department.
 - CDC continues to communicate with state and local health departments to keep them informed.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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/ or www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html.