



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

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SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS) UPDATED INFORMATION FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

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Respiratory infections in travelers returning from areas of risk for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

Currently, only patients who have been to the following areas are considered to be at risk of SARS: Guangdong Province (China); Hong Kong (China); Singapore; Toronto and Vancouver (Canada); Hanoi (Vietnam); Taiwan. Updates on the affected areas will be published by the WHO at www.who.int/en/. For information on SARS Case Definitions and recommended Laboratory Testing, see previous advice or contact your local public health unit.

It is important to keep in mind that most respiratory infections in returned travellers, including travellers to the above areas, will not be SARS.

Although the causative organism has not yet been identified, SARS appears to be transmitted via respiratory droplets during close contact, with health care workers and family members at greatest risk. There is no evidence to suggest that asymptomatic contacts pose a risk of infection to others. As a precaution:

PRIOR TO CLINICAL ASSESSMENT

- **Advise patients to practice standard respiratory precautions**, such as covering the nose and mouth during coughing, and to minimize unnecessary social contact.
 - **If possible, arrange to see patients at home** when they indicate prior to arrival that they may be a SARS case (i.e. new respiratory illness and history of recent travel to one or more of the above areas).
 - **If being seen at your clinic, arrange for the patient to be provided a mask*** on arrival and wherever possible to be taken immediately into a separate consulting room.

DURING CLINICAL ASSESSMENT

- **Wear a mask* and gloves** during the clinical assessment of suspected SARS cases until the diagnosis can be excluded. The consulting room door should be closed, air conditioning switched off and the window opened if possible.
- **Practice standard infection control procedures** with the focus on hand washing and disinfection or disposal of objects potentially contaminated by respiratory secretions.

FURTHER MANAGEMENT

- **Patients should be managed on their clinical merits.** Simple respiratory infections can be managed in the usual way, and do not require investigation.

- **Notify all suspected SARS cases** to your local public health unit [see contact details below]. Notify at the time of diagnosis so that assistance regarding further assessment, specimen collection, and management can be provided.

Those cases with significant illness or needing further investigation are likely to require specialist medical assessment, preferably at a tertiary hospital with isolation rooms.

- **If required, arrange for safe transfer of SARS cases.** The case should continue to wear a mask and the hospital and ambulance staff should be notified prior to the patient's transfer to minimise the extent of health care staff and public exposure to the case. Ambulance staff involved in transfers should be advised to also wear a mask.

MASKS* - Although NIOSH standard masks (N95 able to filter particles 0.3 µm particles) are recommended, a standard surgical mask should be used if NIOSH masks are not available. The aim is to prevent air droplet spread.

Should you require further information or assistance, please contact your local health authority whose details are provided below:

State and Territory Health Department Communicable Disease Contacts

Australian Capital Territory	(02) 6205 2155
New South Wales	See list below
Northern Territory	(08) 8922 8044 a/h Royal Darwin Hospital: (08) 8922 8888
Queensland	(07) 3234 1155
South Australia	(08) 8226 7177
Tasmania	1800 671 738
Victoria	1300 651 160
Western Australia	(08) 9388 4999 (bh) (08) 9480 4960 (ah)

New South Wales - Individual Public Health Units

Public Health Unit	Phone	Fax
Central Coast Public Health Unit	(02) 4349 4845	(02) 4349 4850
Central Sydney Public Health Unit	(02) 9515 3180	(02) 9515 3182
Corrections Health Service Public Health Unit – Long Bay	(02) 9289 2977	(02) 9311 3005
Far West Public Health Unit	(08) 8080 1219	(08) 8080 1683
Greater Murray Centre for Public Health	(02) 6021 4799	(02) 6021 4899
Hunter Public Health Unit	(02) 4924 6477	(02) 4924 6490
Illawarra Public Health Unit	(02) 4255 2200	(02) 4255 2222
Macquarie Centre for Population Health	(02) 6841 2216	(02) 6884 7223
Mid North Coast Population Health Unit	(02) 6588 2750	(02) 6588 2837
Mid-Western Public Health Unit	(02) 6339 5500	(02) 6339 5555
New England Public Health Unit	(02) 6766 2288	(02) 6766 3003

Northern Rivers Institute of Health and Research	(02) 6620 7500	(02) 6622 2151
Northern Sydney Public Health Unit	(02) 9477 9400	(02) 9482 1650
South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit	(02) 9382 8333	(02) 9382 8334
Southern NSW Public Health Unit	(02) 6124 9941	(02) 6299 6363
South Western Sydney Public Health Unit	(02) 9828 5944	(02) 9828 5955
Wentworth Public Health Unit	(02) 4734 2022	(02) 4734 3300
Western Sector Public Health Unit (Sydney)	(02) 9840 3603	(02) 9840 3608