



**Johns Hopkins – SARS  
General Information Sheet  
Frequently Asked Questions  
(Latest Revision December 18, 2003)**

**What is SARS?**

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a collection of symptoms that may lead to pneumonia.

**What causes SARS?**

It is caused by a virus possibly in the same family as a virus called coronavirus.

**How is SARS spread?**

The main way that SARS seems to spread is by close person-to-person contact. The virus that causes SARS is thought to be transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets (droplet spread) produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplet spread can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance (generally up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby. The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye(s). In addition, it is possible that the SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air (airborne spread) or by other ways that are not now known.

**What is a close contact?**

A “close contact” is considered to be any person having

- Cared for;
- Lived with;
- Had face-to-face (within 3 feet) contact with; or,
- Had contact with respiratory secretions (such as fluid from the mouth or nose) from, a person considered or suspected to have severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

For a patient teaching handout on contacts with SARS patients please see attached or visit:

**What are the symptoms of SARS?**

The symptoms are similar to other respiratory illnesses including fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing and muscle or body aches.

**Is there a test that can be used to diagnose SARS?**

Yes, several laboratory tests can be used to detect SARS.

**How should suspected SARS patients be transported to the Emergency Department?**

- Once a patient is determined to be a potential case of SARS, appropriate Hopkins staff will escort them to the Emergency Department.
- Staff should wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and practice good hand washing practices. Patient and visitors should wear a surgical mask during transport.
- Prior to transport, the Emergency Department Charge Nurse should be contacted at 5-2280 and informed about the suspected SARS patient in route.
- The transport route should avoid highly-populated areas, and a dedicated patient elevator, with no other patients on it.
- Personnel in the area to which patient is to be transported should be aware of and follow appropriate precautions.

- Emergency Department Staff will page HEIC at 3-3855 once the patient is in route to the ED and notify entrance desk to open ED access from tunnel.

**What are the infection control precautions for SARS in the outpatient area?**

- Patients who come to outpatient clinical areas will see posters and receive flyers educating them about SARS. Flyers will direct potential at risk patients to inquire at an appropriate area depending on the location closest to the patient's current location.
- JHH employees assisting the patient will explain precautionary measures.

*For handouts or more information, please see visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Website at:*  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/index.htm>