



Health, Housing & Community Services Department
Public Health Division
(510) 981-5300

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Health Advisory

July 16, 2015

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

Please distribute to all providers in your practice

Situation

In response to an outbreak associated with health care facilities in South Korea, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has posted a Health Advisory providing information and guidelines for evaluation of patients for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00380.asp>.

Background

- All identified cases have been linked to a country or territory in or near the Arabian Peninsula including: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen, Lebanon, and Iran. The index case in the outbreak in South Korea had traveled extensively in the Arabian Peninsula prior to becoming ill.
- Individuals infected with MERS-CoV often develop symptoms of severe acute respiratory illness, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- New cases and outbreaks of MERS continue to occur in the Arabian Peninsula.
- MERS currently poses a low risk to residents in the United States: however MERS could spread readily in health care facilities with severe consequences unless cases are identified and appropriate infection control measures are in place.
- No cases of MERS have yet occurred in California.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF CLINICIANS:

OBTAIN TRAVEL HISTORY to reduce the spread of MERS-COV and other infectious diseases associated with travel

SUSPECT MERS-CoV in patients who develop fever ($\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$) and symptoms of respiratory illness AND were in health care facilities in South Korea and/or a country or territory in or near the Arabian Peninsula within 14 days of symptom onset.

IMPLEMENT standard, contact and airborne precautions immediately for a suspect MERS-CoV case. Mask and isolate patient in Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR).

TEST any patient suspect for MERS-CoV; collect multiple specimens from different sites including a lower respiratory specimen (sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage fluid, tracheal aspirate), and nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal swab and serum.

REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO Berkeley PUBLIC HEALTH any suspect patient. Communicable Disease Staff may be reached by phone at **(510) 981-5300** during normal business hours; after hours please call police dispatch at **(510) 981-5911** to contact the Health Officer.

ADVISE patients who are not ill enough to be hospitalized to isolate at home until negative lab result or until contacted by Public Health. Provide patients with surgical masks. They should return home by private car, not public transportation.



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CLINICAL INFORMATION

CDC Interim MERS-CoV Guidance for Healthcare Professionals is available at
<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/interim-guidance.html>

TESTING

Collect the following three specimens for MERS rRT-PCR assay

- 1) Lower Respiratory Tract** (bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate, pleural fluid or sputum) 2-3 mL in a sterile screw-cap sputum collection cup or vial
- 2) Upper Respiratory Tract** (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab) – use only a synthetic fiber swab with plastic shaft and place swabs immediately into the same sterile tube containing 2-3 mL of viral transport media (VTM).
- 3) Serum** (PCR testing if < 14 days since illness onset or for serological testing if >14 days since illness onset) collect 5-10mL of whole blood in a serum separator tube (red top)
- 4) Do not submit specimens to a private lab; please contact Berkeley Public health for guidance on specimen submittal.**

Refrigerate specimens between 2°C -8°C for up to 72 hours and freeze at -70°C if the specimen holding time is expected to exceed 72 hours.

Additional Information

- CDPH: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cder/Pages/MERS-CoV.aspx>
- CDPH MERS-CoV Quick sheet: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/CDPH-MERS-CoV-Quicksheet-June%2012-2015.pdf>
- Specimen collection: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>
- Specimen submittal form (use "General" submittal form):
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/vrdl/Pages/CurrentVRDLSpecimenSubmittalforms.aspx> and
- CDC PUI form: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/downloads/mers-investigation-short-form.pdf>
- CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/index.html>