Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Canada

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS is a viral respiratory infection similar to pneumonia.

How common is it?

During the initial outbreak of SARS, between November 2002 and July 2003, there were 251 suspected infections in Canada, with most cases occurring in Toronto. The first Canadian cases were identified in March 2003 in people who had travelled to Hong Kong and returned to Canada.

SARS demonstrated how quickly a virus can spread internationally.

Regulations reports that since 2004 there have been no known cases of SARS anywhere in the world.

What are the symptoms of SARS?

The main symptoms of SARS included both a fever over 38°C (100.4°F) and respiratory problems. The illness began with a fever greater than 38°C. The fever was associated with chills, headache, muscular stiffness, loss of appetite, malaise, dry cough and shortness of breath, or breathing difficulties.

What is the cause of SARS?

SARS is caused by a virus, called SARS-associated coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that also include the common cold. Researched revealed that the SARS virus was transmitted from civet cats to humans.

How long does SARS take to develop?

The incubation period for SARS ranged in general from 2 to 10 days.

How is SARS transmitted?

SARS spread from person to person through close contact. Examples of close contact include having cared for or lived with a person known to have SARS, or had direct contact with droplets from coughing or sneezing of someone affected by SARS.

Which occupations were at risk?

People caring for individuals with SARS were at the greatest risk for contracting the disease. Those people at risk included all health care workers in institutional settings, such as acute care hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals, mental health hospitals, long term care facilities, and emergency departments, and others who work close to their clients or patients.

Persons living with individuals with SARS were also at risk for contracting the disease.

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