

# Information on MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome)

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MERS is an infection caused by a new type of coronavirus and was first reported in 2012.

Currently, the outbreak and spread of MERS in South Korea has been gathering a lot of attention. Originally, however, the illness emerged in the Middle Eastern region, where it also caused many cases of infection and death.

In South Korea, the first case was reported in May 2015 when a Korean man displayed symptoms of the disease upon his return from Bahrain. Secondary infections ensued at the medical institution where the man was hospitalized and MERS began spreading. In China, one Korean man has been confirmed to have MERS upon entry into the country. The situation surrounding the spread of the disease remains unpredictable.

**Main symptoms** Fever, cough, shortness of breath etc. Some people do not display any of the symptoms even when infected, but MERS seems to further exacerbate the health of individuals with underlying conditions, such as elderly and diabetics.

**Incubation period** 4 – 7 days (max. 14 days)

**Treatment** There are no known vaccines or specific treatments for MERS. The patient receives supportive care to relieve symptoms.

**Transmission** Dromedary camels are said to be the source of infection, however, it is still not accurately known how the disease spreads between people. It is thought that MERS mainly spreads through an infected person's respiratory secretions (coughing or sneezing) or via close contact between family members or hospitalized patients.

## Caution when travelling to Middle East and South Korea

### Before travelling

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Build resistance by taking sufficient rest and nourishment.

Persons with underlying conditions, such as diabetes or chronic lung illness, are urged to consult their doctor prior to departure and reconsider their travel plans if necessary.

Make sure to gather the latest information from the homepage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the relevant Japanese embassy.

### During travel

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Bear in mind to wash your hands frequently to ensure sufficient hand hygiene.

Avoid crowded locations when possible and wear a mask.

Avoid contact, if possible, with people or animals (including camels) that display symptoms such as coughing or sneezing.

In South Korea, people who came into close contact with MERS patients will be subjected to quarantine and forbidden to leave the country.

### Upon return

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If you have symptoms such as fever or cough upon return, report to the airport quarantine station.

If you display symptoms of fever or cough within 14 days upon return, **do not go directly to a hospital.**

**Seek instructions via phone from the closest healthcare center and notify your school and/or workplace.** (Tsukuba Public Health Center; TEL: 029-851-9287)

## For your reference

Persons will be suspected of being infected with MERS upon their return from South Korea if they are displaying symptoms of fever or cough and if in the past 14 days:

1. They have examined, nursed, or cared for a person suspected of being infected with MERS;
2. They have lived together in a room (including a hospital room or ward) with a person suspected of being infected with MERS;
3. They have gotten into direct contact with respiratory secretions or bodily fluids of a person suspected of being infected with MERS.

Healthcare centers will not be notified on potential infections whose suspicion is based solely on travel history.

There is no reason for panic. In the unlikely case of an outbreak, please remain calm and seek out the latest information from the below sources.

[MOFA Homepage](#)

[MHLW Quarantine Information Office Homepage](#)