



UK Health
Security
Agency

MERS-CoV: information sheet for high exposure (category 3) contacts

You have been given this information sheet because you have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), an illness caused by Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Therefore, you may be at risk of developing MERS.

It can take up to 14 days after you have been in close contact with someone with MERS before symptoms start to develop. From the last time you had contact with the person with MERS, you should stay at home and away from other people for 14 days. This will help to keep you and other people around you safe.

A UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) team has been assigned to you as your Infection Safety Team. They can be contacted if you have any concerns regarding MERS-CoV and its symptoms or guidance on what you need to do if you develop any symptoms.

Your designated Infection Safety Team is:

ISO name:

Who can be contacted on:

Contact number:

What you need to do now

Take the following actions to help prevent the spread of MERS-CoV to others, and to ensure that you can get the right support if you develop symptoms. This will help to protect your health, the health of your family and anyone else that you may have contact with. You should follow these actions for 14 days from your last contact with the person who has MERS.

Your designated Infection Safety Team will be in touch with you every day by phone or text for 14 days after you last had contact with someone with MERS to check how you are and whether you have any symptoms.

Check yourself for symptoms

The symptoms of MERS can include:

- fever (temperature of 37.5°C or higher) or feeling feverish
- respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath
- diarrhoea (loose or runny poo)

Check yourself daily for any symptoms of MERS. If you get any of the symptoms of MERS in the 14 days, even if they are mild, phone your designated Infection Safety Team immediately.

Stay at home and away from other people

You should self-isolate for 14 days after the last time you had contact with someone who has MERS. While isolating, you should:

- stay at home and not go to work, school, or public areas
- not have visitors to your home
- not travel, either within the UK or internationally

This will all help to keep you and everyone around you safe.

Ask friends or family for help with buying groceries, collecting medication and other essentials, or order them online for delivery to your home. Friends, family, or delivery drivers should leave your supplies at the front door and not enter your home.

You should only leave your home if it is essential, for example in an emergency, for an urgent medical appointment, or for urgent health and wellbeing issues.

Avoid close contact with other people

If you were to develop MERS, the people who would be most likely to catch MERS-CoV from you are the people that you live with or have close contact with. You should therefore reduce your level of contact with other people in your household to reduce the chance of passing MERS-CoV on to them.

It is particularly important to avoid close contact with people aged 65 years or older and people with medical conditions including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease or those with conditions or taking treatments that reduce their immune system. This is because these people are at higher risk of severe disease if they go on to develop MERS.

Take the following actions to reduce the chance of passing MERS-CoV on to other people within your household:

- do not share a bed or bedding with other people, if possible
- avoid close contact (including kissing, cuddling or other skin-to-skin contact and sexual activity)
- do not share personal items such as toothbrushes, towels, razors, washcloths, plates, cups, and cutlery
- do not share food and drink with other people. You can take out a portion from a larger meal onto a separate plate, but you should not eat from the same plate as anyone else. If you do not finish your food, other people should not eat your leftovers
- use shared rooms such as the bathroom or kitchen after other people have used them. Clean surfaces in these rooms after you have used them
- if you need to spend time in a shared room with others in your household, wear a surgical face mask if possible
- keep windows open to let fresh air in if possible
- clean your hands frequently throughout the day, by washing with soap and water. Use a separate soap dispenser and hand towel to the rest of your household. Alternatively, clean your hands with alcohol hand rub
- use remote communication such as phone, text, or video call to stay in contact with people while you cannot see them in person

Self-isolating with children in the household

Always give children who are isolating the care and contact they need for their wellbeing.

If you are unable to isolate away from a child or children in your household (for example if you are the only parent or guardian in the household), or a child in your household is a close contact of someone with MERS, please take the following steps wherever possible, while ensuring the child is safe and well:

- if possible, wear a face mask when in close contact with them
- it is not recommended that children under 3 wear masks, but older children may wear masks if they can do so safely
- ensure you wash your hands regularly

If you need medical advice

Only go to healthcare or dental appointments if they are essential. Do not attend appointments that can be safely postponed. If you must go for essential treatment, call the health provider in advance, tell them that you are staying at home because you have been in contact with someone with MERS.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding contact your midwife, health visitor, or obstetrician for advice.

Responding to emergencies and critical situations

You should stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to leave, and only leave for:

- emergencies
- urgent medical appointments
- critical health and wellbeing reasons

If it is essential for you to leave your home, you should:

- always wear a surgical face mask
- keep trips as short as possible.
- avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily

What to do if you develop symptoms

If you develop any of the symptoms listed above in the 14 days since you last had contact with the person who has MERS, continue to **stay at home and away from other people**.

Report your symptoms to your designated Infection Safety Team as soon as possible, however mild your symptoms are, and even if you only have one of the symptoms listed above. You should do this even if you have already told them that day that you do not have any symptoms. Your designated Infection Safety Team will ask you questions, arrange an assessment and testing for you, and will tell you what you need to do next.

If there is any delay in contacting your designated Infection Safety Team, phone NHS 111 and tell them about your symptoms and that you have been in contact with someone with MERS.

In an emergency, call 999. Tell the operator you have been in contact with someone who has MERS.

Cleaning your home

Keep your home clean using your usual household cleaning products. Dilute the cleaning products following the manufacturer's instructions if necessary.

How MERS-CoV spreads

MERS-CoV spreads to humans from camels in countries where the virus is circulating. This may be via contact with the camels, or camel products such as milk or meat, contact with an

infected person or attendance at a hospital in a country MERS-CoV is known to be circulating. The infection can spread between people through close contact with the person with the infection, such as prolonged face to face contact in a household or hospital setting. It can take up to 14 days from contact with an infected animal or person for symptoms to develop.

More information about MERS

Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) is a rare but serious disease caused by infection with MERS coronavirus (MERS-CoV), first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012. The virus is known to be present in Saudi Arabia and the surrounding geographic region. The virus is not known to be present in the UK, and cases in the UK were infected outside of the UK, or after close contact with a family member with MERS.

You can find more information about MERS-CoV at:

- MERS-CoV: Background information (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mers-cov-background-information>)
- Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) (<https://www.who.int/health-topics/middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus-mers>)
- your designated Infection Safety Team