UK Health Security Agency

Designated contact number:
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Severe fever with thrombocytopaenia syndrome (SFTS): information sheet for category 4 contacts

You have been given this information sheet because you have had close contact with someone with severe fever with thrombocytopaenia syndrome (SFTS), or material contaminated with the virus that causes SFTS. You should follow the advice in this information sheet and check yourself for symptoms for 14 days from your last possible exposure to SFTS virus. If you develop symptoms of SFTS during this period, stay at home and call your designated contact immediately (see below for details).

About SFTS

SFTS is a rare but serious disease caused by Severe fever with thrombocytopaenia syndrome virus. SFTS virus infection in humans has been reported from countries including China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. SFTS virus is not found in the UK.

How SFTS virus spreads

SFTS virus can spread by:

- direct contact with the organs, blood, secretions, or other body fluids of an infected person
- contact with objects or materials contaminated with blood, secretions, or other body fluids from an infected person
- bites from infected ticks, or direct handling of infected ticks or animals in affected countries

SFTS virus is not spread through routine, social contact such as shaking hands or sitting next to someone who does not have symptoms.

It can take up to 14 days from contact with someone who has the virus for symptoms to develop.

Symptoms of SFTS

The illness begins with symptoms including:

- fever
- tiredness
- headache
- body aches
- dry cough
- sore throat
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- abdominal pain

Some individuals with more severe illness can progress to bruising and bleeding and neurological (nervous system) symptoms including:

- sensitivity to light or sound
- neck stiffness
- seizures
- reduced consciousness (for example drowsiness)

Preventing and treating SFTS

There is currently no licensed vaccine for SFTS. To avoid SFTS virus spreading between people, those caring for individuals with possible or suspected SFTS should avoid contact with the patient's body fluids and should wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Treatment for SFTS is with supportive care, including replacing blood components, balancing fluids and electrolytes, maintaining a person's oxygen status and blood pressure, and treating any co-infections.

Your risk of developing SFTS

You are considered to be at high risk of becoming infected with SFTS virus. You reported that one or more of the following happened:

- you had direct contact with someone who had SFTS without appropriate PPE, or there was a breach in your PPE. This includes exposure to their body fluids, such as blood, vomit, faeces or saliva, or kissing and/or sexual contact
- your skin or mucous membranes were exposed to an environment potentially contaminated with the blood or body fluids of someone who had SFTS, including on clothing or bedding, without wearing appropriate PPE

- you had unprotected sexual contact with someone who previously had SFTS within 3 months of their illness
- you handled clinical or laboratory specimens from someone who had SFTS without adequate protection, for example without appropriate PPE or laboratory practices

We will monitor you for a period of 14 days from your last exposure to SFTS virus. This will mean that we can act quickly in case you develop symptoms, reducing the risks to you and others.

What you need to do for 14 days

Your family and household contacts are not at risk of catching SFTS virus from you if you do not have any symptoms.

You should take the following actions for 14 days from when you were last exposed to SFTS virus:

- check and record your temperature **twice per day at the same times each day** (for example once in the morning and once in the evening)
- monitor yourself for other symptoms of SFTS (as listed above)
- report your temperatures to your designated contact (see below for contact details) by 12 noon each day. They will need to know whether your temperature is below, equal to, or above 37.5°C, and will arrange further assessment as necessary. They will explain the local arrangements for accessing healthcare
- if you develop any of the symptoms listed above in between reporting to your designated contact, you should phone your designated contact immediately. See below for further information on what you should do if you become ill
- for 14 days after your last exposure, avoid close contact, with children aged under 18, pregnant women and with people who have a weakened immune system
- avoid close contact with these people both within your household and others outside of your household
- if your work involves direct contact with people who have a weakened immune system, pregnant women or children, speak to your line manager about options for redeployment or reducing direct contact for 14 days after your last exposure, for example through remote working.

If you are a healthcare worker:

- **you should not have any contact with patients for 14 days after your last exposure**
- speak to your line manager about redeployment to non-patient facing roles during this period.

- UKHSA will contact your occupational health department before you can return to a patient facing role

In addition, for the 14 days from when you were last exposed to SFTS virus:

- avoid non-essential visits to places where it would be impossible for you to self-isolate if you became ill (such as crowded public places)
- do not share towels, bed linen, toothbrushes or razors
- avoid sexual contact with other people
- postpone any non-essential medical or dental treatment, including vaccination. If you need essential medical or dental treatment, inform your healthcare provider about your exposure to SFTS virus

If you do not have any symptoms for the 14 days from when you were last exposed to SFTS virus, you may undertake the following travel:

- any length of trip by private car within the UK
- essential local travel on local commuter or public transport, principally for work. However, you should avoid having to travel by public transport if possible, and keep any trips you make as short as possible
- you should not travel internationally, or via air within the UK

If there are children in the household

If you have children in your household, you should take precautions to minimise direct contact with them as far as possible, while ensuring that their care and wellbeing needs are met.

If a child in your household is a close contact of someone with SFTS, they should receive the care and contact they need to support their wellbeing.

Use of medicines such as aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen

Medicines, such as aspirin, paracetamol, and ibuprofen, can reduce your body temperature during a fever (antipyretic) for up to 8 hours. Thermometer measurements may therefore show a lower temperature than would be expected for up to 8 hours after taking these medicines.

You must call your designated contact for further advice if you need to take an antipyretic medicine.

Please take your temperature before you take aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen. If your temperature is 37.5°C or higher, you must call your contact immediately.

A temperature of 37.5°C or higher is always significant, whether you are taking one of these medicines or not, and must be reported urgently.

What to do if you feel unwell

If you are feeling unwell or develop any of the symptoms of SFTS (including a temperature of 37.5°C or higher) in the 14 days from when you were last exposed to SFTS virus, please **stay at home**. Take your temperature if you have not done this already. **Phone your designated contact immediately** (see below for details), who will arrange for you to be assessed by an appropriate clinician.

If there is any delay in making contact, phone 111 reporting your recent contact with someone with SFTS.

In an emergency, you should call 999 and tell them about your symptoms and your recent contact with SFTS virus.

Your designated contact number is –	Delete this text and type number

More information

More information about SFTS can be found at:

- SFTS: epidemiology, outbreaks and guidance (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/severe-fever-with-thrombocytopaenia-syndrome-sfts-epidemiology-outbreaks-and-guidance)

Document information

Version 1.0. October 2026