

Current Health Event

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus (MERS-CoV) that was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012. With the pilgrims season (Hajj) approaching, WHO is stepping up preparedness measures across the Region to prevent, early detect and respond to any possible spread of MERS-CoV particularly during and in the aftermath of the coming Hajj.

Editorial note:

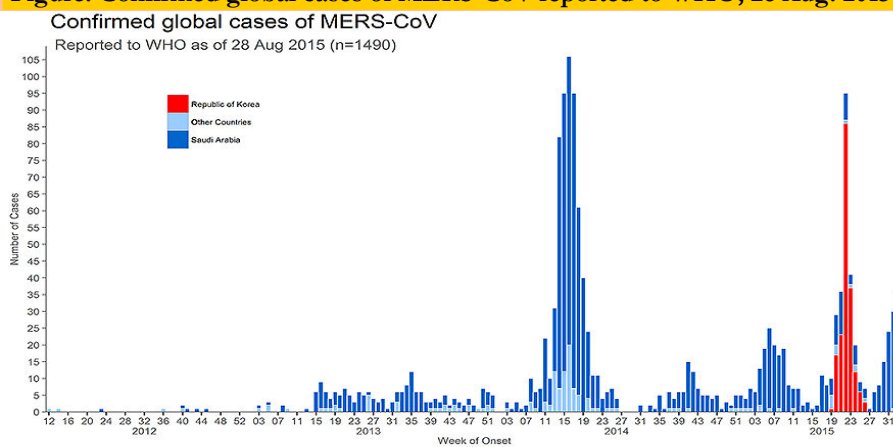
Between 2012 and 1 September 2015, 1478 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with MERS-CoV have been reported to WHO, including at least 516 global deaths. Since 2012, 26 countries have been affected including countries in the Middle East. The majority of cases (75%) have been reported from Saudi Arabia.

WHO expects that additional cases of MERS-CoV infection will be reported from the Middle East, and that cases will continue to be exported to other countries by infected persons.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Typical MERS symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Pneumonia is common, but not always present. Approximately 36% of reported patients have died.

Figure: Confirmed global cases of MERS-CoV reported to WHO, 28 Aug. 2015



Other countries: Algeria, Austria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Netherlands, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Yemen
Please note that the underlying data is subject to change as the investigations around cases are ongoing. Onset date estimated if not available. Source: WHO

Although the majority of human cases of MERS have been attributed to human-to-human infections, camels are likely to be a major reservoir host for MERS-CoV.

The virus does not transmit from inert material, does not pass easily from person to person unless there is close contact. No vaccine or specific treatment is currently available. Treatment is supportive and based on the patient's condition.

Infection prevention and control measures are critical to prevent possible spread of MERS-CoV in health-care facilities.

Lebanon reported one single case of MERS-CoV on 8 May 2014 who survived. Since then, the MoPH and WHO are monitoring and promoting infection control measures at healthcare facilities.

WHO recommends travelers to Saudi Arabia to apply general travel health precautions: washing hands often with soap and water; adhering to good food-safety practices, such as avoiding undercooked meat or food prepared under unsanitary conditions, properly washing fruits and vegetables before eating them, and maintaining good personal hygiene. Travelers who develop a significant acute respiratory illness with fever and cough are advised to seek medical attention immediately and notify their local health authority.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon*

| Disease | 2014 | 2015** | Aug. | Sep. |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|------|
| Vaccine Preventable Diseases | | | | |
| Polio | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| AFP | 53(16) | 75(9) | 5(2) | 0(0) |
| Measles | 235(107) | 30(8) | 1(1) | 1(0) |
| Mumps | 736(117) | 1387(331) | 53(25) | 4(1) |
| Pertussis | 87(25) | 37(6) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Rabies | 1(0) | 2(0) | 2(0) | 0(0) |
| Rubella | 18(12) | 9(1) | 1(0) | 0(0) |
| Tetanus | 0(0) | 2(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Viral Hep. B | 218(33) | 140(22) | 3(0) | 1(0) |
| Water/Food Borne Diseases | | | | |
| Brucellosis | 252(36) | 231(43) | 35(1) | 0(0) |
| Cholera | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Hydatid cyst | 16(2) | 14(1) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Typhoid fever | 546(33) | 331(37) | 37(0) | 2(0) |
| Viral Hep. A | 2582(911) | 690(137) | 43(11) | 3(0) |
| Other Diseases | | | | |
| Leishmaniasis | 663(638) | 32(23) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Meningitis | 232(35) | 259(47) | 31(6) | 0(0) |
| Viral Hep C | 100(6) | 65(3) | 0(0) | 0(0) |

*Numbers in brackets refer to Syrian **as of 11 Sep 2015