

Advisory to Travellers who have travelled to Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea and/or any other affected countries(with MERS-CoV infection”)

Brief:

Globally, since September 2012, WHO has notified of 1289 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 455 related deaths from Middle East countries and other parts of the world till June 15, 2015. The virus appears to be circulating throughout the Arabian Peninsula, primarily in Saudi Arabia, where the majority of cases (>85%) have been reported since 2012. Most people infected with MERS-CoV had severe illness and pneumonia, with around 36% mortality. The virus can spread from person to person through close contact, so pilgrims living and travelling in close quarters may be at risk, even though the risk is considered very low. However, the disease has High mortality and there is no available vaccine or specific treatment for illness. The virus appears to cause more severe disease in older people, people with weakened immune systems, and those with chronic diseases such as cancer, chronic lung disease and diabetes.

Since last month an outbreak of MERS-CoV began in Republic of Korea. There have been 150 confirmed cases of MERS CoV (including 1 confirmed case in China) reported in the current outbreak, with 18 deaths, till 15th June, 2015. World Health Organization and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare have mentioned this as large and complex outbreak, showing epidemiological pattern similar to previous hospital-associated MERS CoV outbreaks in the Middle East.

MERS-CoV is a zoonotic virus that is transmitted from animals to humans.

In view of the impending Haj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia and possibility of disease entering India, as a matter of precaution, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India has issued guidance for the Travelers returning from Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea and/or any of the other MERS-CoV affected countries.

“Anyone person who has travelled to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea or any other MERS-CoV affected country or contacts a case of MERS CoV during the visit and has symptoms such as cough, sneeze, expectoration, vomiting, and diarrhoea, should be given triple layered surgical mask during the travel and should be advised to report immediately on arrival either at immigration desk or Airport Health Organization”.

Note: Keeping in view the incubation period of the disease: “All travellers after returning to India from the affected countries should continue to be on the lookout for symptoms of MERS CoV (as above) for 14 days after arrival and report to the designated health facility* for treatment (* see MOHFW, GOI website)”.

Up dated list of affected countries can be seen from WHO website.

**Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India**

**Advisory to Haj pilgrims and Travelers visiting Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea
and/or any other affected countries on MERS-CoV infection**

Brief:

Globally, since September 2012, WHO has notified of 1289 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 455 related deaths from Middle East countries and other parts of the world till June 15, 2015. Most people infected with MERS-CoV had severe illness and pneumonia, with around 36% mortality. The virus can spread from person to person through close contact, so pilgrims living and travelling in close quarters may be at risk, even though the risk is considered very low. However, the disease has High mortality and there is no available vaccine or specific treatment for illness. The virus appears to cause more severe disease in older people, people with weakened immune systems, and those with chronic diseases such as cancer, chronic lung disease and diabetes.

Since last month an outbreak of MERS-CoV began in Republic of Korea. There have been 150 confirmed cases of MERS CoV (including 1 confirmed case in China) reported in the current outbreak, with 18 deaths, till 15th June, 2015. World Health Organization and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare have mentioned this as large and complex outbreak, showing epidemiological pattern similar to previous hospital-associated MERS CoV outbreaks in the Middle East. During the last 2 weeks 16 cases and 1 death due to MERS-CoV have been reported from Saudi Arabia.

As a matter of precaution, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India has issued following guidance for the Travelers Visiting Saudi Arabia and other MERS-CoV affected countries.

1. Before leaving India advice, on general health precautions.

- Maintain good personal hygiene
- Wash hands with soap and water or disinfectant, especially after coughing and sneezing.
- Use disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing and dispose it in the waste basket.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid direct contact with persons with symptoms such as cough, sneeze, expectoration, vomiting, and diarrhoea and do not share personal gadgets.

2. During Travel to Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea and other MERS-CoV affected countries.

- Travelers suffering from fever while on flight should contact on arrival, the Medical Unit/immigration desk at the International Airport for assistance.

3. During period of stay in affected countries:

- During the stay/pilgrimage avoid close contact with any person having respiratory illness and follow general health precautions as mentioned above.
- People at high risk of severe disease due to MERS-CoV should avoid close contact with animals when visiting farms or barn areas where the virus is known to be potentially circulating.
- For the general public, when visiting a farm or a barn, general hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing before and after touching animals, avoiding contact with sick animals, should be adhered to. People should also avoid drinking raw camel milk or camel urine, or eating meat that has not been properly cooked. Food hygiene practices should be followed.

3.1 Be on the look for Symptoms of MERS CoV infection:

- Travelers Visiting Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea and other affected countries should be familiar with the symptoms of this disease, namely fever, cough, running nose, sore throat and difficulty in breathing. Travelers need to self-monitor their health.

3.2 If you think you have symptoms of MERS CoV infection:

- Consult the medical officer. If need be, seek immediate advice from a medical facility.
- If the advice of the medical doctor is to stay in confined area, avoid close contact with others for 14 days (after your symptoms begin). All close contacts should seek Health care if they develop any symptoms (suffering from fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath), up to 14 days of their return to India. Report to nearest identified health facility if symptoms get aggravated (high fever, difficulty in breathing, blue colour of the skin or lips, blood in sputum).
- Any traveler / haj pilgrim who suspects a contact with person having symptoms of MERS CoV during the visit to Saudi Arabia and/or other affected countries and has fever, cough or breathing difficulty should use triple layered surgical masks and consult medical officer at the designated health facilities notified by the Government.

4. While returning to India

While returning to India, if you have fever, symptoms of respiratory illness during the flight, you are advised to report to the immigration official or Medical Unit upon arrival.

5. After return to India:

After returning to India, for 14 days, continue to be on the lookout for symptoms of MERS CoV and report to the designated health facility* for treatment (* see MOHFW, GOI website).

Do's and Dont's

DOs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand gel.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Stay more than an arm's length from persons afflicted with flu/cough.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious food.

DO NOT:

- Shake hands or hug in greeting.
- Take medicines without consulting a physician.

HEALTH ALERT for MERS-CoV

ALL THE TRAVELRS WHO HAVE VISITED OR TRANSITED FROM any of the following 25 countries:

Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Middle East); Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (UK) (Europe); Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (Africa); China, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Philippines (Asia); and the United States of America (Americas) and other affected countries*

AND ARE SUFFERING FROM:

COUGH, FEVER AND OR SHORTNESS OF BREATH

OR

HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A PERSON SUFFERING FROM SUCH ILLNESS or have visited an health facility (where MERS-CoV cases are treated) SHOULD REPORT TO AIRPORT HEALTH OFFICER FOR BASIC CHECK-UP

ADVISORY:

ANY TRAVELLERS WHO AFTER VISITING ABOVE COUNTRIES DEVELOPS ABOVE MENTIONED SYMPTOMS WITHIN 14 DAYS OF ARRIVAL IN INDIA

THEY SHOULD VISIT NEAREST HOSPITAL FACILITY

**Up dated list of affected countries can be seen from WHO wesite:www/who/csr/int.in*