



Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

Definition:

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory disease caused by the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms of MERS include: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms can also include diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. More severe complications such as pneumonia and kidney failure can occur. Approximately 3-4 out of every 10 patients with MERS die.

Transmission:

MERS-CoV is primarily transmitted by close person-to-person contact such as living with or caring for an infected person. It is transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. All cases of MERS have been in persons who have lived in, traveled to, or been linked to someone who has traveled to the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring areas: Bahrain; Iraq; Iran; Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Syria; the United Arab Emirates (UAE); and Yemen.

Diagnosis:

MERS is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. Respiratory specimens and serum may be collected for diagnostic tests.

Role of the School Nurse:

Education

- Students and staff traveling to the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding areas should be aware of MERS prevention recommendations.

Treatment Recommendations

- Symptomatic students and staff should be referred to their primary care providers for care.

Exclusions

- Exclude from school students with diagnosed MERS.

Reporting Requirements

- MERS is reportable by telephone to Maine CDC immediately upon suspicion.

Resources:

- Maine CDC coronavirus website <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/mers-and-sars.shtml>
- Federal CDC MERS website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/index.html>