

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

Agent: Severe acute respiratory syndrome-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV)

Mode of Transmission: Most likely transmitted from person to person through coughing and sneezing; spreading can also occur by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes. It is possible that SARS-CoV might be spread more broadly through the air or by other routes that are not yet known.

Signs/Symptoms: Weakness, muscle pain, and fever followed by respiratory symptoms, such as cough and shortness of breath. Diarrhea may occur.

Prevention: Factors that may reduce transmission include frequent hand washing, avoidance of touching the eyes, nose, and mouth with contaminated hands, and covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

Other Important Information: Major outbreaks of SARS occurred between November 2002 and July 2003 in Canada, China, Singapore and Vietnam. In the United States, eight people had laboratory evidence of SARS-CoV infection. SARS is thought to have originated in China.

No cases of SARS were reported in Virginia during 2008. Previously, one case of SARS was confirmed in Virginia during the international outbreaks in 2003. The case occurred in a female over age 50 who had traveled to Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore in the four weeks before onset of symptoms. Her exposure most likely occurred in a Singapore hospital, where she had direct contact with patients being treated for SARS. Active global surveillance for SARS has detected no person-to-person transmission of SARS since July 2003.