

MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) Update

Information for Emergency Departments, High Dependency Units and Respiratory Units

- Always obtain a **recent travel history** from febrile patients
- **Consider MERS-CoV infection** in patients with acute pneumonia/pneumonitis **AND** a history of travel from the Middle East in the previous 14 days.
- **Isolate suspect cases** and use standard and transmission-based precautions.
- **Report suspect cases immediately by phone to your local Public Health Unit – 1300 066 055**

Update:

Human cases of MERS-CoV infection continue to be reported from countries of the Arabian Peninsula (particularly Saudi Arabia) with sporadic travel-related infections reported in non-endemic countries. **WHO has recently reported on a cluster of 25 linked cases in Saudi Arabia including 20 healthcare contacts of the index case.** The annual **Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia** will commence around 9 September this year. Many Australians will be among the millions of pilgrims who attend each year. WHO has not identified any increase in transmissibility of the virus, and continues to advise that **appropriate infection control practices can prevent hospital outbreaks.**

Consider MERS-CoV in patients with pneumonia or pneumonitis with onset within 14 days after:

- travelling in countries in or near the Middle East, OR
- close contact (including health care) with ill persons from the Middle East or other places with known MERS-CoV outbreaks. This category takes into account that an index case of MERS-CoV was undiagnosed.

Test patients:

- Seek urgent advice from an infectious disease physician & local laboratory prior to collecting microbial samples
- Testing for MERS-CoV is available at ICPMR (Westmead) and SEALS (Randwick)
- Use appropriate infection control precautions when collecting samples for testing
- Also test for other causes of community-acquired pneumonia and respiratory viruses.

Infection control:

- Isolate suspect cases in a single room with negative pressure air-handling (if available)
- Use standard and transmission-based precautions (contact and airborne), including the use of a P2 mask, disposable gown, gloves and eye protection when entering a patient care area.

Treat patients:

Seek specialist infectious disease advice.

Further information:

NSW Health MERS-CoV Guidance: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/MERS-Alerts.aspx>

WHO MERS-CoV updates: <http://www.who.int/emergencies/mers-cov/en/>



Dr Vicky Sheppard

Director, Communicable Diseases Branch
05 September 2016