



Key Message Points on SARS-like illness April 4, 2003

- There is a case of a SARS-like illness that has been identified in Stanislaus County. The six-year old child is not hospitalized and is in a voluntary isolation at home in Turlock. Her father was ill with a respiratory illness when he returned from the Guangdong province of China two-and-a-half weeks ago. The daughter since has contracted pneumonia with high fever.
- The case cannot be confirmed as SARS because the father was not clinically diagnosed with SARS. CDC guidelines dictate that if the primary case is not diagnosed as SARS, then a secondary case cannot be called SARS. That is why the definition of “SARS-like” case is being used.
- Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (HSA) Public Health Nurses are working with Turlock City School Districts staff in responding to the situation
- HSA has created and distributed information to the Turlock City School Districts to be sent home with all students at Julien Elementary School.
- Public Health Nurses have been tracking the SARS-like case since late Thursday evening, April 3.
- For students in the classroom of the student - Parents of students in the child’s classroom have been notified and should take their child’s temperature once a day to look for fever. A school nurse will take their temperature once a day as well. If symptoms develop, they need to see their doctor and Public Health will be notified.
- Children do NOT need to stay home from school, unless they are exhibiting symptoms. If they have symptoms, they should contact their doctor.
- SARS is a severe form of respiratory illness, accompanied by a fever over 100.5°F and a travel history to mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore or Hanoi, Vietnam, or contact with an ill person who has traveled there in the past 10 days. It should not be confused with the common cold. Symptoms may include muscle aches and pains and headache, followed by sudden onset of fever (greater than 100.5°F) AND respiratory symptoms, including dry cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.
- SARS information is available at www.hsahealth.org and at www.cdc.gov/nccidod/sars

SARS – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Frequently Asked Questions

April 4, 2003

What is SARS?

SARS stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. It is a severe form of respiratory illness, accompanied by a high fever. It should not be confused with the common cold.

Has there been a case of SARS in Stanislaus County?

No. There have been no cases reported in Stanislaus County.

Who is at risk of getting SARS?

Cases of SARS continue to be reported mainly among people who have had direct close contact with an infected person, such as those sharing a household with a SARS patient and health care workers who did not use infection control procedures while taking care of a SARS patient. In the United States, there is no indication of community spread at this time. CDC continues to monitor this situation very closely. People who are at most risk of getting SARS are those who have traveled since February 1, 2003 to:

- * Peoples' Republic of China
(i.e., Mainland China and
Hong Kong Special
Administrative Region)
- * Singapore
- * Vietnam

If I have not traveled to these countries recently, am I at risk?

No. You are not at risk unless you have come into contact with someone who has SARS.

What are the signs and symptoms?

In general, SARS begins with a fever greater than 100.5°F. Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also experience mild respiratory symptoms. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough and have trouble breathing.

What if I have some of these symptoms, but I have not traveled to the countries listed above or been in contact with someone who has SARS?

Many of these symptoms are also symptoms of colds, flu and allergies.

What if I have traveled to the areas listed above and I'm having these symptoms?

You should contact your doctor immediately to be evaluated. Before you see your doctor, cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you have a surgical mask, wear it during close contact with other people. Your doctor will give you more details.

For health related questions you can call the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency Communicable Disease Nurses at (209) 558-5678. For information on the Web, you can go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars

Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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Media Contact: David Jones, Public Information Officer
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Media Advisory

Stanislaus County health and education officials to hold news conference on appearance of first SARS-like illness in Stanislaus County at 4:00 p.m. Friday, April 4.

Stanislaus County- Stanislaus County Public Health Officials have identified a case of a SARS-like illness in Stanislaus County. SARS is a respiratory illness that originated in Asia. This is the first suspected case in Stanislaus County.

Public Health officials and officials from a local school district will hold a press briefing at 4:00 p.m. today in the Martin Conference Room at the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency located at 830 Scenic Drive in Modesto.

The case involves a six-year old child whose father recently traveled to the People's Republic of China and returned with a respiratory illness. The father sought medical treatment after two weeks of illness, but was never clinically diagnosed with SARS. The child has since developed a fever and respiratory illness.

"Because the father was never officially diagnosed, CDC criteria will not allow any case resulting from his illness to be technically called a SARS case," stated Dr. John Walker, Public Health Officer for Stanislaus County. "This is a gray area. But, with the combination of factors including his travel history in the Guangdong province of China, his medical symptoms and with the child manifesting such strong respiratory symptoms and fever, we calling the child's case a SARS-like case that demands our immediate attention."

The Public Health Department is working closely with a local school district in coordinating a response to the illness. Information has been sent home to families and health officials are working closely with school district staff in the response.

"We are continuing to rely on the local medical community to take the lead and help us catch any possible cases as early as possible," Dr. Walker said. "Local physicians and hospitals are our first line of defense and their leadership is vital."

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Prior to any identified cases, Public Health officials began educating the Stanislaus County medical community about SARS. Health alerts and clinical guidelines were issued to increase awareness of SARS among physicians and hospital medical staff, enhance the community's ability to respond to any patient experiencing symptoms, and guide the reporting of any suspected cases to county health officials.

The PH Department has been working with all five (5) local hospitals, local physicians, the medical society, community groups and schools to distribute accurate information on the SARS disease

“The public needs to be reassured that only a very small number of people are at risk,” expressed John Walker, M.D., public health officer for Stanislaus County. “The primary people at risk are those who have recently traveled to mainland China, Hanoi, Vietnam, Hong Kong or Singapore.”

Public health staff have prepared question and answer sheets that have been distributed to schools and CDC information is regularly shared with the medical community as part of public health preparations.

Fact sheet on SARS is attached.

The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (HSA) is an outpatient medical system with 10 medical offices located throughout Stanislaus County. The HSA operates the Public Health Department, an Urgent Care Center and multiple programs serving over 500,000 patients and clients each year in Stanislaus County. The HSA has extensive community health information available at its web site www.hsahealth.org

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