

MERS virus spreading

17th May, 2014



The virus known as MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) has spread enough for the WHO (World Health Organisation) to say the situation is now more serious and urgent. The WHO's assistant director-

general for health security Dr Keiji Fukuda said that the illness currently does not constitute a global health emergency but needs to be carefully monitored in case of a sudden epidemic. Dr Fukuda said declaring an emergency is "a major act" that can unnecessarily "raise anxieties." He added that there is no "evidence of person-to-person transmissibility". The virus has so far been reported in 18 countries since surfacing in Saudi Arabia in 2012. There have been 571 confirmed cases and 171 deaths.

The USA's Center for Disease Control said MERS is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus called MERS-CoV. It said: "Most people who have been confirmed to have MERS-CoV infection developed severe acute respiratory illness. They had a fever, cough, and shortness of breath. About 30 per cent of these people died." Researchers believe it was passed to humans from camels in Saudi Arabia. All of the people who have contracted it have had very close contact with other sufferers. Doctors said it does not pass from person to person like a flu virus. Airports in the U.S. are advising those travelling to the Middle East to: "Wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, avoid close contact with sick people."

Sources: CNN / LA Times / CDC.gov

Writing

Discuss three ways of preventing a pandemic. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

virus / Middle East / serious / urgent / emergency / monitored / anxieties / evidence / respiratory / infection / fever / cough / shortness of breath / sufferers / sick people

True / False

- The WHO said MERS isn't bad enough to be classed as serious. T / F
- The WHO said MERS isn't bad enough to be called an emergency. T / F
- The WHO has no proof that MERS can pass from person to person. T / F
- There have been over 1,000 cases of MERS worldwide. T / F
- MERS kills around a third of people who contract it. T / F
- Researchers believe the virus originated in Saudi Arabian goats. T / F
- The virus has so far been spread via people in very close contact. T / F
- U.S. airports are telling people to stay away from markets. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. spread | a. emerging |
| 2. urgent | b. regularly |
| 3. constitute | c. extended |
| 4. anxieties | d. came down with |
| 5. surfacing | e. amount to |
| 6. developed | f. cautioning |
| 7. passed | g. pressing |
| 8. advising | h. refrain from |
| 9. often | i. transmitted |
| 10. avoid | j. worries |

Discussion – Student A

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'virus'?
- What do you know about the MERS virus?
- Why do you think lots of new viruses have been appearing?
- How do you think this virus will be different from SARS, etc.?
- Should the WHO be giving people more information?
- What would you do if there was a global pandemic?
- Would you travel to the Middle East right now?
- Is too much attention given to viruses like MERS, SARS and H1N1?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Middle East | a. respiratory illness |
| 2. the situation is now more | b. transmissibility |
| 3. constitute a global | c. cases |
| 4. person-to-person | d. virus |
| 5. 571 confirmed | e. of breath |
| 6. a viral | f. Respiratory Syndrome |
| 7. shortness | g. contact with sick people |
| 8. very close contact | h. health emergency |
| 9. like a flu | i. serious and urgent |
| 10. avoid close | j. with other sufferers |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you do when you get cold-like symptoms?
- Do you think viruses will become more dangerous?
- Will doctors be able to cure all viruses one day?
- What do you do to avoid infections?
- What kind of chaos would a global pandemic cause?
- Should all airplanes be grounded if there is a pandemic?
- What news coverage have you seen of MERS?
- What questions would you like to ask the WHO doctor?

Spelling

- Middle East Respiratory emrnsydo
- uiscnttoet a global health emergency
- a sudden idemciep
- there is no veidncee
- since argcusfni in Saudi Arabia in 2012
- 571 iendcform cases
- caused by a inuovrcoasr
- They had efver, cough, and...
- people who have oacdctrten it
- contact with other sfurefesr
- vsnigida those travelling
- iadov close contact

Answers – Synonym Match

1. c	2. g	3. e	4. j	5. a
6. d	7. i	8. f	9. b	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Education

You think education is the best way to stop viruses spreading. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): curfews, free face masks or sterilising public places.

Role B – Curfews

You think curfews are the best way to stop viruses spreading. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): education, free face masks or sterilising public places.

Role C – Free face masks

You think free face masks are the best way to stop viruses spreading. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): curfews, education or sterilising public places.

Role D – Sterilise public places

You think sterilising public places is the best way to stop viruses spreading. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): curfews, free face masks or education.

Speaking – Prevention

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways of preventing infections at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| • hand washing | • stay at home all day |
| • education | • close all borders |
| • avoid public places | • wear gloves |
| • wear a face mask | • eat healthily |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.