

Unofficial translation
Revised 5 May 2003

Announcement of the Ministry of Public Health
Subject: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Outbreak
No. 5/ 2546

Due to the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome which has spread to many parts of the world during the past month. Thailand has admitted several suspected cases who arrived from abroad, but has been able to contain the disease and prevent it from transmission within the country by implementing several control measures with extensive cooperation from the private sector and the general public.

Presently, the information on SARS has been accumulated from research and experience in many countries which has led to improvement of the control measures. In this regard, the Ministry of Public Health wishes to provide updated information and advice to the public including adjustment of several control measures in the country as follow:

1. SARS is caused by a virus. It is transmitted through close contact by coughing or sneezing, and through direct contact with objects such as handkerchiefs, eating utensils, door knobs, or handrails that may be contaminated with patient's respiratory discharge. The cross contamination happens when picking the nose, scratching the face or rubbing the eyes.
2. Normally, an infected person at the time he or she is without symptoms (asymptomatic), does not spread the disease. The disease is usually spread from infected persons with obvious symptoms. Most of infected persons have had very close contact with SARS cases. The infected persons become ill within 2-10 days with the following symptoms: fever of more than 38 degrees celcius, cough, difficulty in breathing. Over ninety percent of the patients will recover in 2-3 weeks. Some cases may progress to severe pneumonia and die of respiratory failure. These cases account for only 6% of total cases.
3. The general public has a very low risk to SARS and need not worry. The high risk groups are those travelling in SARS affected areas and those who have close contact with the people arriving from SARS affected areas, particularly those with symptoms compatible with SARS.
4. The general public should keep themselves healthy by consuming nutritious food, having adequate rest and routinely exercising. This is to adopted, e.g. hand washing before meals and after using toilet, using a serving spoon when having meals with other people, covering one's mouth and nose with a handkerchief when coughing or sneezing, using protective mask when catching cold.
5. The general public should avoid travel to SARS affected areas as notified by WHO. If the travel is unavoidable, protect yourself from infection by strictly following the advice of the Ministry of Public Health and of local health authorities of such areas.
6. For airlines arriving from SARS affected areas and having a passenger on board who is found to have abnormal symptoms, the Ministry of Public Health (Department of Disease Control) may consider isolating the passenger individually, or in groups, or all passengers on board, as deemed necessary.
7. Passengers arriving from SARS affected areas, both Thai and foreigners, will be medical examined at the port health control of every airport, sea port and border check point. Persons with suspected symptoms will be kept under close observation or treated in the hospital with strict isolation until considered safe.
8. Residents of Thailand, both Thai and non-Thai, who return from SARS affected areas are advised to take leave from work or study for 10 days after the arrival, and observe the symptoms at their residence. During that period of time, they should avoid close contact with members of the family. If the following symptoms appear, e.g. fever of more than 38 C, cough, difficulty in breathing, or if they are suspected of having contracted SARS, they should put on the protective mask and seek medical attention immediately. They should also inform the doctor of the

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history of visiting SARS affected areas. If working or studying cannot be refrained, they must seek medical check-up by the physician every 3 days and obtain certification of the absence of SARS symptoms. The medical certificate should be presented to the concerned authority, e.g. the supervisor at the government office, state enterprise, academic institution, private office, etc. to ensure that they will not transmit the disease to their colleagues or fellow scholars.

9. The head authority of government offices, state enterprises, academic institutions, or private offices whose staff return from SARS affected areas should allow their staff to take leave from work or study for 10 days after the arrival, and observe their symptoms at home. During the observation period, they should strictly follow the self care advice of the Ministry of Public Health. Those who opt for work or study during such period of time will be allowed to do so if they present a medical certificate every 3 days certifying the absence of suspected symptoms of SARS.

10. Foreigners and tourists arriving from SARS affected areas, who pass medical examination at the port health control and are allowed to enter the country, are required to wear protective mask for the first 10 days of their stay. Otherwise they must see the physician every 3 days for medical check-up and a medical certificate certifying the absence of SARS symptoms. The medical certificate must be presented to local health authority; in Bangkok Metropolitan area, at the Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health; in other provinces, at the Provincial Health Office.

11. For tourists from SARS affected areas travelling in groups, the group tour manager should recommend that every member of the group wear a protective mask for the first 10 days of their visit in Thailand. Otherwise they must see the physician every 3 days for medical check-up and a medical certificate certifying the absence of SARS symptoms. Self observation is also advised during the visit in Thailand. Those who have fever or cough are suggested to wear a mask, seek immediate medical attention and promptly report to the Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health or the Provincial Health Offices. In case of no suspected symptoms among the tourists, the tour manager must submit a summary report of health observations of the tourist groups every 3 days. If a suspected case of SARS is found, the tour manager must report immediately according to the reporting format issued by the Ministry of Public Health.

12. Hotels or overnight shelters accepting tourists from SARS affected areas must display health recommendation for prevention of SARS with guidelines of self care for the guests as stated in items 10 and 11 of this announcement. Hotel staff should protect themselves from contracting the disease by following the advice of the Ministry of Public Health. Anyone suspected of having SARS symptoms is advised to wear a hygienic mask, seek medical attention and immediately report to the Ministry of Public Health or Provincial Health Offices.

13. Every person going abroad must pass a pre-departure medical screening. Those who are suspected of SARS should seek medical attention for appropriate treatment.

14. Every hospital, both public and private, must prepare isolation rooms and a medical team dedicated for admission of patients suspected of SARS. If a referral is necessary, patient transfer must be carried out in an ambulance with appropriate practice of infection control before, during and after the transfer.

If a patient suspected of SARS is found, please report within 24 hours to local health authority; in Bangkok Metropolitan area, to the Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, telephone: 02-590-1782, fax: 02-590-1784; in other provinces, to the Provincial Health Offices.

In case of further inquiry, in Bangkok Metropolitan Area, please call 02-590-1991; in other provinces, please call 1669. Information can also be accessed through the Ministry of Public Health's website at www-ddc.moph.go.th/sars_center.html.

Effective immediately.

Announced on May 2 B.E. 2546
Sudarat Keyuraphan
Minister of Public Health