



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Date: June 12, 2015

To: Local Public Health Officers, Tribal Health Officers,  
Hospital Emergency Departments and Infection Preventionists

From: Jeffrey P. Davis, MD, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases

RE: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) Infection

### **Please Distribute Widely**

Since May 2015, the Republic of (South) Korea has been investigating an outbreak of MERS-CoV. To date, it is the largest known outbreak of MERS outside the Arabian Peninsula. Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend that Americans change their travel plans to the Republic of Korea or other countries because of MERS, this outbreak has resulted in additional guidance to detect cases of MERS-CoV in the United States occurring among travelers returning from affected areas. See the CDC Health Advisory of June 11, 2015 at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00380.asp>

The following information describes the processes for case detection, follow-up and testing for novel coronaviruses.

#### **Reporting of Patients Under Investigation (PUI)**

PUIs should be immediately reported to the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH). Specimens from these patients will be approved by DPH for laboratory testing. To request approval for testing during business hours, please call the DPH at 608-267-9003. For after-hours approval, call 608-258-0099 and ask for the communicable disease epidemiologist on call.

Local health departments will be asked to collect data pertaining to PUIs, using the one-page short form referenced in the Guidance for Health Departments below. Local health departments should fax completed investigation forms to DPH at 608-261-4976.

#### **Testing for Novel Coronavirus**

At present, PCR testing of specimens for MERS-CoV is available in Wisconsin only at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH). Currently available diagnostic tests for other coronaviruses are not suitable for detecting this new virus.

To increase the likelihood of detecting MERS-CoV, CDC recommends collection of specimens from multiple sites from each patient that include:

- **(Preferred specimen)** A lower respiratory tract specimen that could include (induced) sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, or a tracheal aspirate and
- A nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal swab, and
- Serum

Current specimen collection guidance is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html> . The DPH will approve requests for tests to be conducted at the WSLH if a patient meets the CDC criteria described below.

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk
<b>Severe illness</b> Fever <i>and</i> pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome (based on clinical or radiological evidence)	and	A history of travel from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula <sup>1</sup> within 14 days before symptom onset, <i>or</i> close contact <sup>2</sup> with a symptomatic traveler who developed fever and acute respiratory illness (not necessarily pneumonia) within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula <sup>1</sup> . – <i>or</i> – A history of being in a healthcare facility (as a patient, worker, or visitor) in the Republic of Korea within 14 days before symptom onset. <b>(New Guidance)</b> – <i>or</i> – A member of a cluster of patients with severe acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever and pneumonia requiring hospitalization) of unknown etiology in which MERS-CoV is being evaluated, in consultation with state and local health departments in the US.
<b>Milder illness</b> Fever <i>and</i> symptoms of respiratory illness (not necessarily pneumonia; e.g., cough, shortness of breath)	and	A history of being in a healthcare facility (as a patient, worker, or visitor) within 14 days before symptom onset in a country or territory in or near the Arabian Peninsula in which recent healthcare-associated cases of MERS have been identified. – <i>or</i> – Close contact <sup>2</sup> with a confirmed MERS case while the case was ill.

<sup>1</sup> Countries considered in the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring include: Bahrain; Iraq; Iran; Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Syria; the United Arab Emirates (UAE); and Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> Close contact is defined as: a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) or within the room or care area for a prolonged period of time (e.g., healthcare personnel, household members) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (i.e., gowns, gloves, respirator, eye protection); or b) having direct contact with infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (i.e., gowns, gloves, respirator, eye protection).

### Guidance for Health Departments (CDC)

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) Patient Under Investigation (PUI) Short Form  
<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/downloads/mers-investigation-short-form.pdf>

Interim Home Care and Isolation Guidance for MERS-CoV

- <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/hcp/home-care.html>

### Guidance for Healthcare Providers, Infection Control (CDC)

Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Hospitalized Patients with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

- <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/infection-prevention-control.html>

### Guidance for Virus Shipping and Outbreak Enhanced Surveillance Requisition Form (WSLH)

- <http://www.slh.wisc.edu/wcfn-surveillance/surveillance/virology-surveillance/>

Questions or concerns regarding this memo can be directed to - [Thomas Haupt](mailto:Thomas.Haupt@wi.gov) 608-266-5326, e-mail [Thomas.Haupt@wi.gov](mailto:Thomas.Haupt@wi.gov), or the Bureau of Communicable Diseases main phone number, 608-267-9003.