What is SARS?
SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, is a serious and sometimes deadly respiratory disease. It was first identified in 2003 and has since been reported in regions across the world, primarily in Asia, North America, and Europe. SARS typically affects the lungs but can also impact other body systems, including the digestive system.

What causes SARS?
SARS is caused by a previously unknown virus that belongs to the corona virus family. The virus is thought to have originated from animals, potentially bats, and was transmitted to humans, leading to the outbreak of the disease.

How do you get SARS?
SARS is primarily transmitted through direct person-to-person contact, although it can also spread via airborne droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Close contact with body fluids of an infected individual can also transmit the virus.

What are the symptoms of SARS?
Symptoms of SARS usually begin with:
- High fever of 100.4°F or more
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache

Additional symptoms may include:
- Dry cough
- Dizziness
- Difficulty in breathing
- In some cases, severe diarrhea

Who is at risk of becoming SARS-infected?
People at higher risk of contracting SARS include:
- People age 40 or older, especially those over 65
- People with other medical conditions (such as heart or liver disease), or chronic illnesses (such as a weak immune system)
- Healthcare workers or family members of a SARS-infected patient

How does the sickness develop?
The incubation period of SARS is usually 2 – 7 days, but may be as long as 10 days. High fever, chills, muscle aches, and headaches are common early symptoms. After 3-7 days, a dry, non-productive cough develops, which could progress to oxygen insufficiency in the blood. Up to 20% of patients may require intubations and mechanical ventilation. Worldwide, approximately 15% of people who contracted SARS have died. Additionally, about 10% – 20% of these patients required medical intervention.

What is SARS?
Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a recent, sometimes deadly, respiratory disease. SARS has been reported mainly in Asia, North America and Europe. SARS typically affects the lungs, but it may also attack the digestive system.

Worldwide, approximately 15% of people who contracted SARS have died.
What is the treatment for SARS?

The treatment for SARS is supportive care for symptoms, such as liquids to avoid dehydration or ventilators to help breathing. Researchers are currently working on the development of a vaccine against SARS and drugs that could block the *corona virus* infections. 

*Antibiotics are not effective, since SARS is not a bacterial but a viral disease.*

How can you protect yourself against SARS?

**Take proper safety precautions:**
- Wear respirators with an N-95 filter at a minimum. Make sure they fit tightly to your face;
- Wear gowns, gloves and eye protection;
- Make sure there is appropriate ventilation in your workplace;
- **Wash your hands** with low or intermediate level disinfectants, or wash hands frequently with plenty of water and soap.

What can your employer do to protect you from SARS?

- Develop a plan to identify and treat SARS patients.
- SARS education classes for healthcare workers, so that SARS symptoms can be identified and health personnel can protect themselves.
- Screening procedure for all patients before they enter the emergency room or other patient entrances to the healthcare facility (the personnel receiving patients with SARS symptoms will have to have special training).

If you have been exposed to SARS and cannot go to work, do you lose your pay?

- Ask your employer about their policy.
- Workers who have been exposed to SARS or have contracted the sickness and are asked to stay at home in order to avoid spreading SARS should take sick leave, not vacation time, and should not suffer a loss of wages.

*Remember that under federal OSHA or state plan OSHA programs your employer is required to provide you with a workplace that is “free from recognized hazards” [OSHAct section (5) (a) (1)].*

For more information visit the following websites:

**US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**World Health Organization:**
[www.who.int/csr/sars](http://www.who.int/csr/sars)

**Service Employees’ International Union:**
[http://www.seiu.org/docUploads/Final_SARS_Factsheet_5_21_03.pdf](http://www.seiu.org/docUploads/Final_SARS_Factsheet_5_21_03.pdf)