

Dear Colleagues,

## **Re: Risk of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) for travellers**

With an increased number of Australians traveling to the Arabian Peninsula during the FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar, ACT Health is asking health professionals to be alert to the possibility of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in unwell travellers returning from the Middle East.

Countries in the Middle East that have been affected by MERS include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen. Transmission of the MERS coronavirus can occur via contact with infected dromedary (one-humped) camels or uncooked camel products, or via close contact with human cases.

### **Advice for outbound travellers to the Middle East:**

- Avoid closed contact with sick people and sick animals.
- Wash hands/use hand sanitiser regularly, and especially after any contact with camels.
- Avoid raw camel milk, undercooked camel meat and anything contaminated with camel secretions.
- Avoid contact with other people if you feel sick and seek medical advice if you develop symptoms of MERS.

### **Advice for returned travellers from the Middle East:**

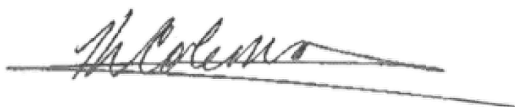
- Watch out for symptoms including fever, cough, breathing difficulties and diarrhoea.
- See a doctor immediately if you feel unwell, especially if you have a weakened immune system.
- Talk to a Biosecurity Officer if you feel unwell on arrival in Australia.

### **Management of a suspected case:**

If you are treating a patient with compatible symptoms (fever, cough, breathing difficulties, diarrhoea), please obtain a full travel and exposure history. If there is a relevant exposure history in the 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms, please:

1. Follow contact and airborne precautions for infection control. Please see [the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#) for details.
2. Contact the Infectious Diseases doctor on-call (via hospital switch) for testing and management advice.
3. Contact the Communicable Disease Control Unit (02 6205 2155) to discuss further public health actions such as notification and contact management.

More detailed advice, including [Information about MERS for health professionals](#) and [Management guidelines for MERS coronavirus in general practice](#) are available on the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care website.



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