

Portland-area woman treated for sickness with SARS-like symptoms

Public health officials at the Oregon Dept. of Human Services (DHS) are investigating Oregon's first possible case of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

"Although this person technically meets the case definition prescribed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is counted as a case on their Web site, other more common diagnoses are thought to be more likely at this time," said Dr. Mel Kohn, DHS state epidemiologist.

The Portland-area resident, 57, visited China last month and came down with respiratory symptoms during her trip. She was admitted to the hospital five days after returning to the United States and has responded well to initial treatment. She is currently stable and appears to be recovering, according to Kohn.

Although the diagnosis of SARS in this patient is still not confirmed, Kohn said that the hospital is taking appropriate precautions to prevent infection of other patients, health-care providers and the general public.

Kohn said that since SARS was first recognized, DHS has received several reports of suspicious respiratory illnesses, but that this is the first one that has met the case definition criteria established by the federal CDC. Additional evaluation and laboratory testing is underway to establish the patient's diagnosis.

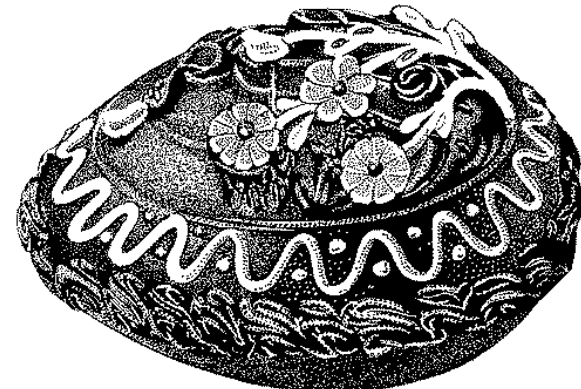
Symptoms of SARS are a cough, illness since Feb. 1, and a temperature of at least 100.4° F. in someone who has traveled to mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore or to Hanoi, Vietnam. People who fit these criteria should contact their health-care providers, Kohn

advised.

"It's important that they do not just drop in to see their doctor," Kohn said. "They need to call ahead and arrange for an examination where medical staff can protect themselves and other patients."

"Health authorities in this country and internationally are working together to understand the cause of SARS and how it is spread," Kohn said. "We are working with county public health partners to prevent the disease from spreading in Oregon."

As of the middle of last week, CDC reports 100 suspect cases of SARS in the United States. Oregon is the 29th state to report a suspect case. Worldwide, SARS has afflicted 2,270 persons and 79 people had died, as of April 3, 2003. No one in the United States has died.



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