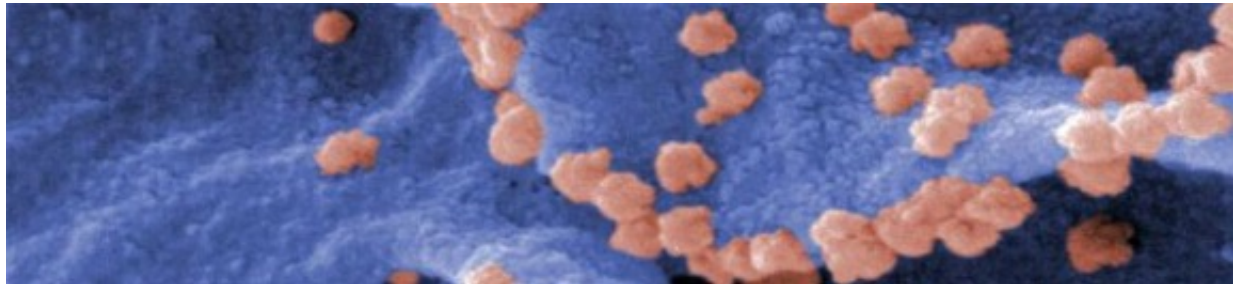


CDC SARS Response Timeline



SARS: Key Events

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was first discovered in Asia in February 2003. The outbreak lasted approximately six months as the disease spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia before it was stopped in July 2003. See below a timeline of CDC's key activities conducted during the outbreak and beyond.

2002

November 16: The first case of atypical [pneumonia](#) is reported in the Guangdong province in southern China.

[Top of Page](#)

2003

March 12: The World Health Organization (WHO) issues a global alert for a severe form of pneumonia of unknown origin in persons from China, Vietnam, and Hong Kong.

March 14: CDC activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

March 15: CDC issues first health alert and hosts media telebriefing about an atypical pneumonia that has been named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). CDC issues interim guidelines for state and local health departments on SARS.

CDC issues a "Health Alert Notice" for travelers to the United States from Hong Kong, Guangdong Province (China).

March 20: CDC issues infection control precautions for aerosol-generating procedures on patients who are suspected of having SARS.

March 22: CDC issues interim laboratory biosafety guidelines for handling and processing specimens associated with SARS.

March 24: CDC laboratory analysis suggests a new coronavirus may be the cause of SARS. In the United States, 39 suspect cases (*to date*) had been identified. Of those cases, 32 of 39 had traveled to countries where SARS was reported.

March 27: CDC issues interim domestic guidelines for management of exposures to SARS for healthcare and other institutional settings.

March 28: The SARS outbreak is more widespread. CDC begins utilizing pandemic planning for SARS.

March 29: CDC extended its travel advisory for SARS to include all of mainland China and added Singapore. CDC quarantine staff began meeting planes, cargo ships and cruise ships coming either directly or indirectly to the United States from China, Singapore and Vietnam and also begins distributing [health alert cards](#) to travelers.

April 4: The number of suspected U.S. SARS cases was 115; reported from 29 states. There were no deaths among these suspect cases of SARS in the United States.

April 5: CDC establishes community outreach team to address stigmatization associated with SARS.

April 10: CDC issued specific guidance for students exposed to SARS.

April 14: CDC publishes a sequence of the virus believed to be responsible for the global epidemic of SARS. Identifying the genetic sequence of a new virus is important to treatment and prevention efforts. The results came just 12 days after a team of scientists and technicians began working around the clock to grow cells taken from the throat culture of a SARS patient.

April 22: CDC issues a health alert for travelers to Toronto, Ontario (Canada)

May 6: In the United States, no new probable cases were reported in the last 24 hours, and there was no evidence of ongoing transmission beyond the initial case reports in travelers for more than 20 days. The containment in the United States has been successful.

May 20: CDC lifted the travel alert on Toronto because more than 30 days (or three SARS incubation periods) had elapsed since the date of onset of symptoms for the last reported case.

May 23: CDC reinstated travel alert for Toronto because on May 22, Canadian health officials reported a cluster of five new probable SARS cases.

June 4: CDC removed the travel alert for Singapore and downgraded the traveler notification for Hong Kong from a travel advisory to a travel alert.

July 3: CDC removed the travel alert for mainland China.

July 5: WHO announced that the global SARS outbreak was contained.

July 10: CDC removed the travel alert for Hong Kong and Toronto.

July 15: CDC removed the travel alert for Taiwan.

July 17: CDC updated the SARS case definition which reduced the number of U.S. cases by half. The change results from excluding cases in which blood specimens that were collected more than 21 days after the onset of illness test negative.

December 31: Globally, WHO received reports of SARS from 29 countries and regions; 8,096 persons with probable SARS resulting in 774 deaths. In the United States, eight SARS infections were documented by laboratory testing and an additional 19 probable SARS infections were reported.

[Top of Page](#)

2004

January 13: CDC issues "Notice of Embargo of [Civets](#)." A SARS-like virus had been isolated from civets (captured in areas of China where the SARS outbreak originated). CDC banned the importation of civets. The civet is a mammal with a catlike body, long legs, a long tail, and a masked face resembling a raccoon or weasel. The ban is currently still in effect.

[Top of Page](#)

2012

October 5: The National Select Agent Registry Program declared SARS-coronavirus a select agent. A select agent is a bacterium, virus or toxin that has the potential to pose a severe threat to public health and safety.