

New Saudi death from MERS virus

June 6 2013

The Saudi health ministry on Thursday announced the death of one of its citizens in the eastern region of Al-Ahsaa after he contracted MERS, a SARS-like virus.

The ministry website said the latest death, announced on Wednesday, brings to 25 the number of people who have died from the virus since September, adding that 40 people are suffering from the disease in the kingdom.

The strain was renamed the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome [Coronavirus](#), or MERS, reflecting the fact that the bulk of the cases are in that region, mainly in Saudi Arabia.

On May 31, the [World Health Organisation](#) said that the global death toll from the virus has risen to 30.

Previously known as nCoV-EMC novel coronavirus, the disease is a cousin of [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#) (SARS), which sparked a world health scare in 2003 when it leapt from animals to humans in Asia and killed some 800 people.

Like SARS, MERS appears to cause an infection deep in the lungs, with patients suffering from a temperature, coughing and difficulty breathing.

However, it differs from SARS in that it also causes rapid [kidney failure](#)

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Health officials have expressed concern about the high rate of fatalities compared to the number of cases, warning that the disease could spark a new global crisis if it acquires an ability to spread more easily.

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