

Two deaths, six new MERS virus cases in Saudi: WHO

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Eight new cases of the deadly coronavirus MERS, a SARS-like infection, have been registered in Saudi Arabia, the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday.

Of the eight, two men from the capital Riyadh had died, the WHO said. Both had underlying medical conditions.

Three women and three men, all from Riyadh or the southern region of Asir, have also contracted the virus, which affects the respiratory system.

In addition, a 38-year-old man who had been suffering from a lung infection died, the Saudi health ministry announced earlier Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia is the country worst hit by MERS, which has killed 49 people globally. A total of 102 cases have been registered.

Experts are struggling to understand MERS—Middle East Respiratory Syndrome—for which there is still no vaccine and which has an extremely high [fatality rate](#) of more than 51 percent.

It is considered a cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

Like SARS, MERS is thought to have jumped from animals to humans, and it shares the former's flu-like symptoms—but differs by also causing

kidney failure.

According to research published this month in the American health journal Emerging Infectious Diseases, MERS was transmitted to humans from bats. But a study in the Lancet found that the virus could have come from camels.

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