

MERS virus strikes Jordan couple in UAE

November 29 2013

Two new cases of the potentially deadly MERS respiratory virus, including a heavily pregnant woman, have been reported in the United Arab Emirates, media Friday cited health authorities as saying.

A 38-year-old Jordanian resident was hospitalised with [breathing problems](#) and diagnosed to be a carrier of MERS, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus.

His wife, who is eight months pregnant, was also hospitalised after being diagnosed as suffering from the disease, [health authorities](#) in Abu Dhabi said.

In July, the authorities reported that there had been seven MERS cases in the oil-rich Gulf federation in which foreign residents comprise 80 percent of the population.

The World Health Organisation says it has been informed of 160 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection worldwide since September last year, including 68 deaths.

Saudi Arabia is the worst affected country, accounting for 55 deaths out of 130 confirmed cases.

Experts are struggling to understand the MERS virus, for which there is no vaccine.

It is considered a deadlier but less-transmissible cousin of the SARS

virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

In August, researchers pointed to Arabian camels as possible hosts of the virus.

Like SARS, MERS appears to cause a lung infection, with patients suffering from a temperature, cough and breathing difficulties.

But it differs in that it also causes rapid kidney failure and the extremely high death rate has caused serious concern.

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