

# UN health agency: Don't name diseases after regions, animals

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The World Health Organization is issuing new advice on the best way to name new diseases—guidelines the U.N. health agency itself has previously broken.

In a statement published on Friday, WHO criticized disease names like Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome and [swine flu](#), which can be stigmatizing. WHO said officials shouldn't name diseases after geographic locations, animal species, or peoples' names. It said names should include "generic descriptive terms."

In 2003, WHO announced the name for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, first seen in southern China and Hong Kong. For months, Hong Kong officials battling an outbreak of the illness—led by Dr. Margaret Chan, now WHO's chief—refused to refer to it as such, since Hong Kong is known as a Special Administrative Region, or SAR.

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