

UK hospital's casualty wing briefly closed over suspected MERS cases

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A British hospital's accident and emergency wing was temporarily shut down on Monday while it investigated two cases of suspected Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

Both patients at the Manchester Royal Infirmary in northern England have been isolated for treatment, the local public health trust said in a statement.

"This afternoon, we confirmed that we are currently investigating two patients for suspected Middle Eastern Respiratory Virus Syndrome - Coronavirus Infection (MERS-COV)," a spokesperson said.

"Both patients were isolated for on-going management of their condition while tests took place. One patient has now been relocated to North Manchester General. Results of the tests are still pending."

The accident and emergency wing of the hospital was temporarily closed before being re-opened later on Monday after the tests were carried out.

The last person to be diagnosed with the potentially deadly virus in Britain was in February 2013, although there has been a recent increase in cases in the Middle East and a deadly outbreak in South Korea.

Rosemary McCann, North West deputy director for Public Health England, said that the risk of contracting infection in Britain "remains very low".

There is no known vaccine for MERS, a viral respiratory disease which has killed 490 people—almost all of them in Saudi Arabia—since it was first reported in 2012, according to the World Health Organisation.

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