

# MERS virus kills Qatari

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A 66-year-old Qatari man has died after contracting the MERS virus, in the first fatal case in the Gulf state for 10 months, health officials announced Thursday.

The public health ministry, quoted by the official Qatar News Agency, said the man "had been suffering from several chronic diseases and died of complications from the disease".

This was the first such case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome reported in Qatar since May 2015 when it claimed the life of a 73-year-old man, the ministry added in a statement.

The ministry "continues to monitor acute respiratory diseases and is working in cooperation with all the health institutions in the public and private sectors to monitor any suspected case," it said.

The latest victim had been diagnosed with the virus in February. He was hospitalised after returning from a "neighbouring country", according to an official statement last month.

MERS is a viral respiratory illness and considered a deadlier but less infectious cousin of the SARS virus that appeared in Asia in 2003, infecting more than 8,000 people and killing hundreds.

Like SARS, it appears to cause a lung infection, with patients suffering coughing, breathing difficulties and a temperature.

MERS differs in that it also causes rapid kidney failure.

It first appeared five years ago in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, which has been the country worst hit by the [virus](#), with 1,286 cases of infection and 551 deaths, according to official figures.

Globally, there have been 1,644 confirmed MERS cases and 590 deaths, according to the World Health Organization.

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