

## Novel coronavirus - Frequently asked questions

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## About novel coronavirus

### What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

They are found worldwide in humans and animals.

### What is a novel coronavirus? What is the 2019-nCoV virus?

A novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

As of 21 January 2020, more than 200 cases of a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) which originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China, in December 2019.

The novel coronavirus is closely related to SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) coronavirus and in the same family as MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) coronavirus.

At least four deaths have been reported.

Other cases have been detected in Shenzhen and Beijing (China), Japan, Thailand and South Korea. Most of these individuals have reported travel to Wuhan.

## How is the novel coronavirus spread? Can I catch it?

Coronavirus experts think that it's likely that the novel coronavirus originated in an animal species, and then spread to humans.

Person to person spread of the novel coronavirus is reported as occurring, but it is not yet understood how easily this happens.

Other human coronavirus strains are spread from person to person through contaminated droplets from a person who is sick with the illness (through coughing or sneezing) or contaminated hands.

## Is the virus being transmitted from one person to another?

Chinese health officials have confirmed the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is spread by human-to-human transmission.

## What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is a fever. Other symptoms include , cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress. At least four people have died from the infection.

## How long do symptoms take to present?

It is unknown at this stage but most likely between two and 14 days.

## I have symptoms. What should I do?

If you have travelled to Wuhan City in the past 14 days and have a fever and respiratory signs and symptoms, please call ahead and book in to see a doctor. Tell your doctor when you call that you have been in Wuhan.

Practice simple hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly.

## What should I do if I come into contact with a person with symptoms, or who I think has returned to Australia recently from Wuhan?

Monitor your health.

If you develop symptoms including a fever and respiratory signs, please call ahead and book in to see a doctor. Tell your doctor that you have been in contact with someone from Wuhan.

Practice simple hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly.

### Are any groups of people particularly at risk?

It's likely that people with underlying medical conditions such as heart or lung disease will be at risk of more severe disease if infected with the novel coronavirus.

### How can I protect myself / my family?

Practice simple hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly.

Avoid close contact, when possible, with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

### Do face masks protect against the virus? Which face masks?

P2 masks are likely to provide some protection against the virus, but these must be fitted and worn properly.

P2 masks are not recommended for this purpose outside the health care setting. People who think that they might be infected with novel coronavirus should wear a surgical mask (or P2 mask) in order to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to anyone else.

### Is there a cure or vaccine?

Currently there are no available vaccines that protect against coronaviruses.

There is no specific treatment. Most of the time, symptoms will go away on their own. People who have serious disease with complications can be cared for in hospital.

### Has my doctor been informed?

Health workers in NSW public hospital emergency departments as well as community-based general practitioners have already been issued advice on symptoms and actions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus through careful infection control measures.

### Are people in NSW at risk?

As of 7pm 25 January 2020, there are three confirmed cases for 2019-nCoV in NSW and four cases under investigation.

The risk for Australians is low.

NSW Health has developed and exercised a range of procedures for case finding, diagnosis, and contact tracing for high consequence infectious diseases (such as pandemic influenza, SARS, MERS, and emerging infections) should they occur in NSW.

### I have a holiday / work trip. Should I cancel my trip?

If you are heading overseas to destinations which may have been affected, check the advice on [\*\*Smart Traveller\*\*](#).

### Where can I find more information?

- Visit the NSW Health website - [Infectious disease alerts](#)
- Visit the [World Health Organization](#)

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## Children returning to school or child care

### What if my child is unwell?

Any child who is unwell should not attend childcare or school. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

### What if my child was in contact with someone who has the coronavirus?

Any child, who has been in contact with a person confirmed as having novel coronavirus, should not attend school or childcare during the 14 days after last close contact with that person. Contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 for advice.

Close contact is defined as 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus in any setting, or sharing a closed space with a person with confirmed coronavirus for more than 2 hours.

### What if my child is returning to school after visiting Wuhan?

School students (including boarding school students) returning from Wuhan who are well, and have **not** been contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus, can continue to attend school provided that they follow the advice below.

If they develop a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath, the student should be isolated from other people.

If the student is a boarder, the school should take the child to their usual GP for assessment, and phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others.

If the student is not a boarder, the parents should be asked to take the child for medical attention as soon as possible, but to phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others.

In all cases the school should contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 and provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

## Students returning to university or TAFE

### What if I am unwell?

Any student who is unwell should not attend university or TAFE. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

### What if I have returned from Wuhan or have been in contact with a patient with coronavirus?

Students returning from Wuhan, or who have been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, and are well can attend university provided that they follow the advice below.

If they develop a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath, they should seek medical attention as soon as possible, but phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others.

Please contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 and provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

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