

Chief Health Officer

Alert – for immediate attention



2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Status: Active

Date issued: 29 January 2020 (Update to 24 January 2020)

Issued by: Dr Brett Sutton, Chief Health Officer

Issued to: Clinicians and patients

Key messages

- A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak has been identified, focused on Hubei Province in mainland China. Please see the departmental website for regular updates: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>
- The department is now advising all people who have visited Hubei province in mainland China to stay at home and avoid public settings until 14 days after leaving Hubei Province. Anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed case of 2019-nCoV should also stay at home and avoid public settings until 14 days after their last contact.
- The department has now confirmed two cases of novel coronavirus in Victoria, including one man in his 50s notified on 25 January and a second case in a man in his 60s confirmed on 28 January.
- The second confirmed case attended a restaurant dinner at the House of Delight restaurant in Glen Waverley between 1730 and 1900 on 26 January 2020. Anyone who was at the restaurant at that time should contact the department on 1300 651 160. There are no other locations of concern.
- The department has updated guidelines to health services and general practitioners, with modifications to the case definition and exclusions recommendations. These are now available at: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-health-services-novel-coronavirus>
- Be alert for patients who have travelled to Hubei province, mainland China within 14 days of onset of illness and who present with fever and respiratory symptoms.
- Please ensure a surgical mask is placed on the patient as soon as they are identified and place them in a negative pressure room or single room. Notify the Department of Health and Human Services on 1300 651 160.
- Routinely ask a travel history in patients with respiratory symptoms. See below for a detailed case definition to inform testing.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have updated a Smartraveller travel advisory for Hubei province to level 4 – ‘do not travel’ and for China overall to level 3 – ‘reconsider your need to travel’.
- A public information hotline is serviced by Nurse-on-Call – 1800 675 398.

What is the issue?

A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak has been identified associated with Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. As of 29 January 2020, health authorities in China have reported more than 5000 cases and over 100 deaths.

Confirmed cases have been identified in mainland China, as well as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Nepal, France, USA and Canada.

Most confirmed cases have a history of travel to Hubei province or have links to the province. There is some evidence of human-to-human transmission outside of Wuhan.

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in this outbreak has not previously been identified in people. Coronaviruses are a large and diverse family of viruses that include viruses that are known to cause illness of variable severity in humans, including the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). They are also found in animals such as camels and bats.

Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services confirmed the first Australian case of the 2019 novel coronavirus on 25 January 2020. A second case was confirmed on 28 January 2020. The man, in his 60s, visited Wuhan, China in the days before his illness onset. He has been reviewed in hospital and is isolated at home.

Novel coronavirus 2019 is now a notifiable condition under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 and is required to be notified by medical practitioners and pathology services as soon as practicable

Who is at risk?

The situation is evolving rapidly as we find out more about this new virus.

Anyone who has travelled to Hubei Province, mainland China or is a close or casual contact of a confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is at risk. See below and the website for a full case definition.

Anyone unwell person who presents with a letter, email or other correspondence from a state or territory public health or communicable disease unit informing them they are a contact should be treated as a suspected case.

Anyone who attended the House of Delight restaurant in Glen Waverley between 1730 and 1900 on 26 January 2020 should contact the department on 1300 651 160.

Symptoms and transmission

Reported symptoms include fever and respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Sore throat and headache have also been reported. Recent information on the transmission of the virus suggests that cases may be infectious up to 48 hours before the onset of symptoms.

The following case definitions are now in place in Victoria:

Confirmed case

A person tested for 2019-nCoV at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory and found to have 2019-nCoV infection.

Suspected case

Both clinical **and** epidemiological criteria need to be met for a person to be classified as a suspected case.

Clinical criteria:

Acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath or cough or sore throat) with or without fever

AND

Epidemiological criteria:

A history of being in Hubei province, China, including Wuhan City, in the 14 days prior to symptom onset

OR

Close contact within 14 days of symptom onset with any of the following:

- *a confirmed or suspected case of 2019-nCoV;*
- *a healthcare facility in mainland China, Hong Kong or Macau (where limited hospital-associated infections have been reported).*

Note: a patient with severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and a history of travel to any part of China in the 14 days prior to symptom onset, after discussion with the department, may be classified as a suspected case and

tested for novel coronavirus. As per the World Health Organization definition SARI is an illness with fever AND cough AND admission to hospital. A casual contact with compatible symptoms, after discussion with the department, may be classified as a suspected case and tested for novel coronavirus.

Recommendations

Advice for clinicians

Clinicians are asked to be alert for patients of any age presenting with respiratory symptoms who meet the suspected case definition above. Please ensure that patients presenting with compatible symptoms, especially pneumonia, are asked about travel specific to Hubei province, China.

If you have a patient who meets the suspected case definition above:

- Place a surgical mask on the patient;
- Undertake an assessment in a private room with the door closed if negative pressure ventilation is not available;
- Apply droplet and contact precautions (single-use face mask, eye protection, gown and gloves). If available, Airborne Precautions can be applied as well by wearing a P2 respirator (N95 mask) instead of a single use face mask during any assessment;
- Notify the Department of Health and Human Services immediately on 1300 651 160, who will assist with conducting a public health risk assessment and short epidemiological questionnaire for suspected cases;
- Undertake testing in your hospital or with your primary pathology service for alternative causes as soon as possible, in particular for respiratory viruses using a multiplex PCR if available;
- After discussion with the Department, you may be advised to take:
 - Respiratory specimens – combined nasopharyngeal and throat swabs in ambulatory patients and sputum (if produced) and/or endotracheal aspirate or bronchoalveolar lavage
 - Blood (serum) - these samples are to be sent for novel coronavirus testing at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory.

Advice for travellers

The department has updated its recommendations and is now advising all people who have visited Hubei province in China to stay at home and avoid public settings until 14 days after they left Hubei. Likewise, anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed case of 2019-nCoV should also stay at home and avoid public settings until 14 days after their last contact. In line with this updated advice, students and teachers who have travelled to Hubei Province in China should not attend school or university until 14 days after leaving Hubei.

Students and teachers who have travelled to other parts of China are **not** required to stay away from school or university unless the following applies:

- The person is a confirmed case of novel coronavirus, or
- The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus in past 14 days.

If you traveled to Hubei province and feel sick, you should:

- Avoid contact with others, except for seeking medical care.
- Don't travel while sick.
- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency department, call ahead and tell the doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.

More information

Clinical information

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-health-services-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.who.int/china/news/detail/09-01-2020-who-statement-regarding-cluster-of-pneumonia-cases-in-wuhan-china>

Consumer information

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-public-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

<https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/china>

Contacts

For more information please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control section at the Department of Health and Human Services on 1300 651 160 (24 hours).

A public information hotline is serviced by Nurse-on-Call – 1800 675 398.

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