

January 31, 2020

The Facts about novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV): What You Need To Know

Disclaimer: Information is current as of January 31, 2020. Due to the evolving nature of this issue recommendations may change quickly.

Current Situation and Background

- A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) causing viral pneumonia has emerged from Wuhan, China and has now been detected elsewhere in China and internationally. The majority of 2019-nCoV cases are in the city of Wuhan, China or nearby cities and in travelers returning from Wuhan. The initial cases were linked to a market in Wuhan, suggesting transmission from a yet unidentified animal reservoir.
- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a type of virus that may infect humans and non-human animals. There is a large spectrum of clinical illness in humans, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness, depending on the type of coronavirus and the individual. Two recent examples of coronaviruses capable of causing severe human illness include the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that emerged in 2002, and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), that emerged in 2012.
- Currently, it appears that the 2019-nCoV can cause similar disease to SARS, but may be less severe; however, the medical and scientific communities are rapidly learning more about the full spectrum of illness of this infection.
- Reported fatalities have been primarily in adults, many of whom have concomitant underlying medical issues.

Risk and Management of Cases

- The current risk to Canadians is low, but it is expected that a few cases in returning travelers will be seen. At the time of writing, two related cases in travelers from Wuhan were identified in Canada.
- Canada is prepared to manage imported cases of 2019-nCoV. Public health teams at the federal, provincial, and local levels have systems in place to enable and facilitate case detection and case management.
- Health care providers should follow direction from their local and provincial public health units for advice on case reporting and management.
- 2019-nCoV testing is available in Canada and has a 1-2-day turnaround time. Refer to your provincial public health laboratory for specimen collection and processing information.
- Infection with 2019-nCoV appears to present with fever in almost all cases often with a cough, shortness of breath and/or muscle aches. Other symptoms may also be present. Clinicians should consider 2019-nCoV in people with those symptoms plus a history of travel to China or contact with a suspected or confirmed case of 2019-nCoV within the prior two weeks. Individuals returning with these symptoms and travel/contact history should contact their health care provider immediately. Follow instructions from your health care provider.
- Treatment of 2019-nCoV involves supportive care as no antiviral therapies for this infection are currently available.
- Infection Prevention and Control measures are locally determined. Droplet, contact plus airborne precautions are suggested by many public health units.

What you can do

- Because we are in our influenza and respiratory virus season, respecting **cough etiquette** is an important way you can help stay healthy, even in the absence of nCoV in Canada. Persons should cover coughs and sneezes, preferably with a tissue, and then dispose of tissues and disinfect hands immediately after a cough or sneeze, or (if a tissue is not available) cough or sneeze into a shirt sleeve. Touching the eyes, nose, and mouth should be avoided to help slow the spread of germs (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>).
- The use by healthy individuals of masks in public areas as a means to protect yourself is not recommended.

Communication and Role of AMMI Canada

- AMMI Canada is the national specialty association that represents physicians, clinical microbiologists and researchers specializing in the fields of medical microbiology and infectious diseases.
- Through promotion of the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of human infectious diseases and by their involvement in clinical practice, education, research and advocacy, AMMI Canada members aim to serve and educate the Canadian public.
- As with all emerging infectious disease, our members are actively involved at multiple levels in the readiness and response efforts to the novel coronavirus in Canada.

Resources

Public Health Agency of Canada:

- **Outbreak Update** - Canada.ca/coronavirus / Canada.ca/le-coronavirus

Latest Travel Advice

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

- 19 Questions and answers covering the virus, travellers and Government of Canada actions
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/frequently-asked-questions.html>

Information Sheet

- <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases/coronavirus/handout-eng.pdf>