



What you need to know

There is an outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in mainland China.

If you are a traveller from mainland China or think you may have been a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus, special restrictions apply to you. You must isolate yourself, which means you stay at home and do not attend public places, including work, school, childcare or university. For the latest advice on who needs to isolate, go to www.health.gov.au

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus.

The Department of Health is closely monitoring the coronavirus situation in collaboration with the World Health Organization and Australian states and territories.

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

The virus originating in Hubei Province, China, is called 'novel' because it is new. It had not been detected before this outbreak.

How is this coronavirus spread?

The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes, or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Most infections are only transmitted by people when they have symptoms. These can include fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness and shortness of breath.

Who needs to isolate?

To help limit the spread of coronavirus, you should isolate yourself in the following circumstances:

- If you have left, or transited through, mainland China in the last 14 days you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of leaving mainland China.
- If you have been in close contact with a proven case of coronavirus, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of last contact with the confirmed case.

What does isolate in your home mean?

People who must be isolated should not attend public places, in particular work, school, childcare or university. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home.

Do not allow visitors into the home. Where possible, get others such as friends or family who are not required to be isolated to get food or other necessities for you. If you must leave the home, such as to seek medical care, wear a mask if you have one. For more information visit <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>

What do I do if I develop symptoms?

If you develop symptoms (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath) within 14 days of leaving mainland China, or within 14 days of last contact of a confirmed case, you should arrange to see your doctor for urgent assessment.

You should telephone the health clinic or hospital before you arrive and tell them your travel history or that you may have been in contact with a potential case of coronavirus. You must remain isolated either in your home or a healthcare setting until public health authorities inform you it is safe for you to return to your usual activities.

Who is most at risk of a serious illness?

Some people who are infected may not get sick at all, some will get mild symptoms from which they will recover easily, and others may become very ill, very quickly.

From previous experience with other coronaviruses, the people at most risk of serious infection are:

- people with compromised immune systems, such as people with cancer
- elderly people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- very young children and babies, and
- people with diagnosed chronic medical conditions.

How is the virus treated?

There is no specific treatment for coronaviruses. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Most of the symptoms can be treated with supportive medical care.

How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- avoid contact with others (touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact)
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of the tissue, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Should I wear a face mask?

You do not need to wear a mask if you are healthy. While the use of masks can help to prevent transmission of disease from infected patients to others, masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of infections like coronavirus.

More information

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.