

Coronavirus Update

January 28, 2020

Background

Late in 2019, China identified outbreak of respiratory illness in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. Many initial cases involved people who worked at or were frequent visitors to a specific Seafood Market. Early in January 2020, China notified the World Health Organisation that it had identified a new form of Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) as the cause of the outbreak. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which include the common cold, but also more significant illnesses such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

There is now evidence that 2019-nCoV can spread from person to person, and cases have been identified worldwide including South East Asia, North America, Australia and Europe. Along with many countries, New Zealand has instigated monitoring of travellers from China on entry to New Zealand. While there are travel restrictions in place within China, there are no other international restrictions. Numerous international sporting events planned for China, have recently been cancelled.

The 2019-nCoV may cause a range of symptoms including fever, cough and breathing difficulty. The majority of cases are mild, but approximately 20% may progress to severe lung disease. Currently, the death rate appears low, and has largely affected in the elderly and those with chronic health conditions. The incubation period is uncertain, with estimates varying from 4 to 14 days.

The World Health Organisation continues to monitor the situation closely and is releasing regular updates.

Travel Recommendations

- Avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.
- Frequent handwashing, especially after direct contact with ill or their environment.
 - Specifically, travel with hand sanitiser (HPSNZ utilises 'Zoono')
- People with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands).
- Avoiding unprotected contact with farm or wild animals.
- When travelling, consider:
 - Humidifier mask for the plane
 - Blis oral probiotic tablets
 - Saline nasal spray
 - Antiseptic gargle (Betadine)
- Ensure you visit your Medical Director or General Practitioner prior to travel
- If you are feeling unwell at any time (particularly after travel), see your Doctor!

Recommended Information Sources

- **World Health Organization:**
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- **NZ Ministry of Health:**
<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>
- **Safetravel NZ:**
<https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/news/novel-coronavirus-china-2019-ncov>