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| Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)  DHHS key messages  28 January 2019, 16:00 |

# Situation

The Department of Health and Human Services is working closely with the Victorian health sector, Commonwealth and international agencies to respond appropriately to the outbreak of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, in mainland China.

This is a rapidly changing situation.

# Background

The first cases of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) were detected in China in late December 2019 and case numbers are continuing to increase. Most cases have been identified in people who have travelled to the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, in mainland China. On 7 January 2020 Chinese authorities confirmed that the cause of these infections was a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

Five cases have been confirmed in Australia. One case is in Victoria and four in New South Wales. All cases have had direct contact with Wuhan.

At least 82 deaths have been confirmed in people found to have the virus in mainland. More cases of the disease have been detected in other parts of mainland China and in some other countries including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, France, the United States, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Nepal, France.

At the current time - it is very unlikely that a person could develop this infection unless they have travelled to an affected area in mainland China in the 14 days before they have become unwell.  There is no confirmed human-to-human transmission of this virus in Australia.

The Department has established a website about the novel coronavirus which includes important information to the public about hand washing, cough etiquette and other appropriate infection control actions they can take:  <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>

# What is novel coronavirus?

* This is a virus that can cause an infection in people, including a severe respiratory illness.
* The virus seen in Wuhan, mainland China is called ‘novel’ because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people infected live in, or travelled to, Wuhan, mainland China.
* There have been cases of 2019-nCoV reported in other Chinese provinces and other countries. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

# What are the symptoms of novel coronavirus?

* The virus appears to cause a range of symptoms, from a mild infection with a fever, to a significant respiratory infection (pneumonia).
* Anyone who has travelled recently to Wuhan or Hubei province is asked to seek medical assistance if they develop flu-like symptoms.

# Confirmed case in Victoria

**There has been one confirmed case in Victoria at this time.**

At this stage, Victoria has only one confirmed coronavirus case. The patient is a man in his 50s who is being treated in an isolation room at the Monash Medical Centre, Clayton. His condition is stable. A small number of people are currently being tested for coronavirus in Victoria.

# How does it spread?

Health authorities around the world are working hard to figure out how the 2019-nCoV virus spreads.

Most people who initially caught the virus either worked or visited the Wuhan seafood market in central China. However, most cases now are not linked to that market.

China’s National Health Commission has since confirmed the virus has been passed from person-to-person and has infected some healthcare workers. The World Health Organisation has assessed that the virus can spread between people.

# Victoria’s response

Victoria has a world-class hospital system that is well-prepared and rehearsed to deal with an escalation of cases of any infectious disease.

The Department has long-established plans and processes in place to respond to pandemics or outbreaks.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services is working with health authorities across Australia and the world to monitor and track the situation.

The department has provided health services, health professionals and GPs with detailed guidelines on how to protect themselves while assessing and testing patients suspected of having coronavirus.

 A Victorian Chief Health Officer Alert on the issue was first issued to health professionals on 10 January with regular updates from Victoria and the Commonwealth.

# Hotline

The Department has established a hotline where any member of the public can call to seek information on Coronavirus and discuss further actions on 1800 675 398. Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only.

# Facemasks

Face masks are not recommended for use by members of the public in Victoria for the prevention of infections like novel coronavirus.

Should any health professional be required to treat a suspected or confirmed case, they will be supported by following standard infection control guidelines.

# Advice for schools and educational institutions

**Exclusion from school/childcare**: In accordance with national public health guidelines and current information about the coronavirus from the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer and the World Health Organization, exclusion of students who have travelled to Wuhan, in mainland China, or any other areas where there have been reported cases, is not required unless the following applies:

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

**If you/your child feels sick now or within 14 days of being in Wuhan, mainland China or other countries with cases in the last 14 days:**

* If your child has fever, sweats, chills or shortness of breath, they must be excluded from school until they have been reviewed by a doctor.
* Seek medical attention but first place a mask on the student if you have one and call the doctor or hospital before you go and tell them your child has been in.
* When you get to the hospital or doctor’s clinic, tell them your child has recently been in Wuhan, in mainland China, or other countries with cases of 2019-nCoVand ensure a mask is placed on your child before or as soon as you arrive at the medical facility.
* If your child has severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath: Call 000 and request an ambulance, and inform the paramedics that the patient has been in Wuhan, in mainland China, or other countries with cases of 2019-nCoV.

# How to protect yourself and your family

The easiest way to protect yourself and your family is to pay attention to good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, or cough into your elbow, dispose of the tissue into a bin and then wash your hands afterwards. Wash your hands regularly, after using the toilet and before eating.

Please familiarize yourself with infection prevention guidance on the incident webpage under ‘advice for the general public: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>

If you have concerns about your health, please see your doctor.

Healthcare workers are recommended to consistently apply appropriate infection prevention control measures when looking after patients

# Public Health

If you are ill and have travelled to an area of the world where there is active transmission of novel coronavirus in the 14 days prior to onset of your illness, you should call ahead to your general practitioner before attending, and inform them of your concern. You will then be isolated in a room, where available, and your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and where you have travelled.

The Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) at the Doherty Institute is the reference laboratory for the testing of all Victorian coronavirus samples.

# Treatment

There is no specific treatment for disease cause by novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and therefore treatment will be based on the patient’s clinical condition.