

Fact Sheet 2.0: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Last updated: February 27th 2020

The worldwide Covid-19 or Coronavirus outbreak is a rapidly changing situation. This information is correct as of 27th February 2020, and will be updated if the advice or situation changes.

Background

Coronavirus are part of a large family of viruses that cause a range of illness in humans, from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The first case of a new Coronavirus (COVID-19) was reported on the 31 December 2019 in Wuhan in the Hubei Province of China. The initial outbreak in China has now spread to many other countries around the world, including the UK.

As of 26 February 2020, there have been 81,109 confirmed global cases, mostly in China (78,191Z). There have been 2,718 deaths in China and 44 deaths outside of China. There have been 2918 confirmed cases in 37 countries including 13 cases in the UK. Currently, the main areas of the disease are Iran, Northern Italy, South Korea and Hubei, China.

Although our understanding of the virus and its impact is still not fully known, it seems that the death rate is lower than for other similar outbreaks, such as SARS.

In the UK, following the World Health Organisation declaration that this is a public health emergency of International Concern, the risk level has been raised from low to moderate. This allows the government to plan for all eventualities. However, the risk to individuals remains low.

What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

- Fever (over 38C)
- Dry Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Weakness and malaise
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Headache

These symptoms are similar to the common cold or flu. The symptoms will be more severe for those who already have pre-existing illnesses, such as asthma or heart disease, or those who are elderly.

How can someone catch Coronavirus?

The incubation period is up to 14 days: this means that it can take someone up to 2 weeks to develop symptoms having been exposed to the virus. It is thought that transmission is via droplets from coughing and sneezing, and also from environmental contact, i.e. touching surfaces touched by an infected person. A vaccine is not currently available, and will take about 2 years to develop.

How can I protect myself from Coronavirus?

The best way to prevent the virus spreading is by avoiding contact with individuals with the infection, and also by maintaining good hygiene practices. The Department of Health and the World Health Organisation have issued the following guidance:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport, or being in public places.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- If you feel unwell, stay at home, do not go to work

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.

What treatment is available?

- A vaccine is not currently available.
- Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness.
- Antibiotics will not help as they do not work against viruses.
- You will need to stay isolated away from other people until you have recovered.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice

The FCO is currently advising against all travel to Hubei Province, and against all but essential travel to the rest of mainland China.

The FCO is also advising against all but essential travel to:

- Daegu and Cheongdo in South Korea
- Ten small towns in the Lombardy region and one in the Veneto region of Italy

Entry restrictions

Many countries in Asia and some further afield have introduced screening measures and entry restrictions at border crossings and transport hubs. If you have recently been in China or other affected countries, you may not be allowed to enter or transit, or you may be required to enter a period of quarantine after entry.

Screening measures on arrival may include temperature checks, and you could be asked about your general health or recent travel history. Where these checks identify a concern, further medical checks may be required.

Returning Travellers

If you have returned from mainland China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia or Macau in the last 14 days and experience cough or fever or shortness of breath, you need to stay indoors and call NHS 111, even if your symptoms are mild.

If you have returned from the following specific areas since the 19th February, you should call NHS 111 and stay indoors and avoid contact with other people even if you do not have symptoms:

- specific [lockdown areas in northern Italy](#) as designated by the Government of Italy
- [‘special care zones’ in South Korea](#) as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea
- Hubei province (returned in the past 14 days)
- Iran

If you have returned from the following areas since 19 February and develop symptoms, however mild, you should stay indoors at home and avoid contact with other people immediately and call NHS 111. You do not need to follow this advice if you have no symptoms:

- Northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini)
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

Further advice and information:

- Fit for travel - <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home>
- Travel Health Pro - <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/498/covid-19-update>
- WHO – <https://www.who.int/>
- FCO - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>
- PHE - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>
- NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Compiled by Jo Thompson and Alison Coulter with information from WHO, FCO, Travel health pro, NHS and PHE.

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Postal Address: The Pheasantry, Henley Road, Medmenham, Marlow, SL7 2EU
Registered Address: The Tall House, 29a West Street, Marlow, SL7 2LS
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