

Coronavirus - information for parents and carers

The Department of Education is currently working with the Ministry of Health to monitor and respond to the unfolding international novel coronavirus situation. Advice has been distributed to NSW Public Schools in accordance with advice received from the Ministry of Health.

There has been a small number of cases of confirmed Novel Coronavirus in NSW. In

In accordance with national public health guidelines, exclusions only apply for those who are a:

- confirmed case of Novel Coronavirus - exclude until medically cleared
- close contact of a confirmed case of Novel Coronavirus - exclude for 14 days since last contact with the confirmed case.

Staff or students who have recently returned from overseas and are well, and are not close contacts of a confirmed case, are able attend work or school as normal.

Close contact is defined as living in the same household, 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus in any setting, or sharing a closed space with a person with confirmed coronavirus for more than 2 hours.

The Ministry of Health has processes in place to identify any close contacts of cases confirmed in Australia. Advice about not attending school would be provided to these close contacts by the Ministry of Health.

Consistent with current guidelines, staff and students who are unwell with respiratory illness should remain at home until symptoms resolve. In accordance with our current practice if any child becomes unwell we will implement our infection control guidelines and follow the advice provided by the Ministry of Health as appropriate.

The Department will continue to monitor the situation closely and take advice received from NSW Ministry of Health to ensure we are responding to the situation appropriately.

From <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/school-safety>

Novel coronavirus 2019

Coronaviruses are very common viruses found worldwide in humans and animals.

They cause respiratory disease, including common colds. Coronaviruses, however, are also responsible for MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).

Current status

As of 25 January 2020, more than 900 confirmed cases of in an outbreak of novel coronavirus 2019 (2019-nCoV) have been detected in the Wuhan City and other parts of China, including 25 deaths.

Other cases have been detected in Shenzhen and Beijing (China), Japan, Thailand and South Korea. Most of these individuals have reported travel to Wuhan.

The situation is evolving rapidly - the [WHO updates](#) for current outbreak information. Like other communicable diseases, people with symptoms should practice simple hygiene by covering coughs and sneezes and washing their hands thoroughly.

When to see your doctor

If you have travelled to Wuhan City in the past 14 days and have a fever and respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat or shortness of breath), please call ahead and book in to see a doctor.

Sydney is the only Australian destination with direct flights from Wuhan, with three flights arriving per week. That is why NSW Health is supporting Commonwealth biosecurity efforts at Sydney airport. Advice is being provided to travellers who land in Sydney so that they know what to do if they become unwell. Passengers from Wuhan who are unwell on arrival will be assessed at the airport by NSW Health.

NSW hospitals and GP clinics

Health workers in NSW public hospital emergency departments as well as community-based general practitioners have already been issued advice on symptoms and actions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus through careful infection control measures.

Further, the Westmead Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research (ICPMR) laboratory has developed pathology testing that will detect the new coronavirus.

Infection with the new coronavirus is now a notifiable condition under the *NSW Public Health Act*, so all cases and suspected cases must be reported by doctors to NSW Health public health authorities who will work to prevent spread of the infection to others.

NSW Health activity

NSW Health has developed and exercised a range of procedures for case finding, diagnosis, and contact tracing for high consequence infectious diseases (such as pandemic influenza, SARS, MERS, and emerging infections) should they occur in NSW.

From <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

About novel coronavirus

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

They are found worldwide in humans and animals.

What is a novel coronavirus? What is the 2019-nCoV virus?

A novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

The novel coronavirus is closely related to SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) coronavirus and in the same family as MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) coronavirus.

How is the novel coronavirus spread? Can I catch it?

Coronavirus experts think that it's likely that the novel coronavirus originated in an animal species, and then spread to humans.

Person to person spread of the novel coronavirus is reported as occurring, but it is not yet understood how easily this happens.

Other human coronavirus strains are spread from person to person through contaminated droplets from a person who is sick with the illness (through coughing or sneezing) or contaminated hands.

Is the virus being transmitted from one person to another?

The novel coronavirus (n-CoV) can be spread from person to person most likely by coughing or contact with respiratory secretions.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is a fever. Other symptoms include, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress.

How long do symptoms take to present?

It is unknown at this stage but most likely between two and 14 days.

I have symptoms. What should I do?

If you have travelled to Wuhan in the past 14 days and have a fever and respiratory signs and symptoms, please call ahead and book in to see a doctor. Tell your doctor when you call that you have been in Wuhan.

Practice good hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.

What should I do if I come into contact with a person with symptoms, or who I think has returned to Australia recently from Wuhan?

Monitor your health.

If you develop symptoms including a fever and respiratory signs, please call ahead to talk to a doctor. Tell your doctor that you have been in contact with someone from Wuhan. The doctor may tell you to attend your nearest emergency department, if so call ahead before attending.

Practice simple hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly.

Are any groups of people particularly at risk?

It's likely that people with underlying medical conditions such as heart or lung disease and the elderly will be at risk of more severe disease if infected with the novel coronavirus.

How can I protect myself / my family?

Practice simple hygiene by covering your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands thoroughly.

Avoid close contact, when possible, with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

Do face masks protect against the virus? Which face masks?

P2 masks are likely to provide some protection against the virus, but these must be fitted and worn properly.

P2 masks are not recommended for this purpose outside the health care setting. People who think that they might be infected with novel coronavirus should wear a surgical mask (or P2 mask) in order to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to anyone else.

Is there a cure or vaccine?

Currently there are no available vaccines that protect against coronaviruses.

There is no specific treatment. Most of the time, symptoms will go away on their own. People who have serious disease with complications can be cared for in hospital.

Has my doctor been informed?

Health workers in NSW public hospital emergency departments as well as community-based general practitioners have already been issued advice on symptoms and actions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus through careful infection control measures.

Are people in NSW at risk?

As of 6pm 26 January 2020, there are three confirmed cases for 2019-nCoV in NSW and one case under investigation.

NSW Health has developed and exercised a range of procedures for case finding, diagnosis, and contact tracing for high consequence infectious diseases (such as pandemic influenza, SARS, MERS, and emerging infections) should they occur in NSW.

I have a holiday / work trip. Should I cancel my trip?

If you are heading overseas to destinations which may have been affected, check the advice on [Smart Traveller](#).

Where can I find more information?

- Visit the NSW Health website - [Infectious disease alerts](#)
- Visit the [World Health Organization](#)

Children returning to school or child care

What if my child is unwell?

Any child who is unwell should not attend childcare or school. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

What if my child was in contact with someone who has the coronavirus?

Any child, who has been in contact with a person confirmed as having novel coronavirus, should not attend school or childcare during the 14 days after last close contact with that person. Contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 for advice.

Close contact is defined as 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus in any setting, or sharing a closed space with a person with confirmed coronavirus for more than 2 hours.

What if my child is returning to school after visiting Wuhan with in the last 14 days?

School students (including boarding school students) returning from Wuhan who are well, and have **not** been in contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus, can continue to attend school provided that they follow the advice below.

If they develop a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath, within 14 days of returning the student should be immediately isolated from other people.

If the student is a boarder, the school should give the child a surgical mask if available and take the child to their usual GP or emergency department for assessment, and phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor so that the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others.

If the student is not a boarder, the parents should be asked to give the child a surgical mask if available and take the child to their usual GP or emergency department as soon as possible, but to phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others.

The doctor can assess the situation and may recommend the at the student attend a nearby emergency department. If so call ahead before attending the emergency department.

In all cases the school should contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 and provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

Students returning to university or TAFE

What if I am unwell?

Any student who is unwell should not attend university or TAFE. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

What if I have returned from Wuhan or have been in contact with a patient with coronavirus in the last 14 days?

Students returning from Wuhan, or who have been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, and are well can attend university or TAFE provided that they follow the advice below.

If they develop a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath within 14 days of exposure, they should:

- Immediately isolate themselves from other people
- Wear a mask (if available)
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible, preferably at the local Emergency Department - Ideally they should phone ahead to speak to the doctor in the emergency department so that appropriate arrangements can be made to protect others

The doctor can assess the situation and may recommend that the student attend a nearby emergency department. If so call ahead before attending the emergency department.

Please contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 and provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

From <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx>