

2019 Novel Coronavirus

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Disease Basics

Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. [Learn about 2019 Novel Coronavirus.](#)

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), is not that same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

A diagnosis with coronavirus 229E, NL63, OC43, or HKU1 is not the same as a 2019-nCoV diagnosis. These are different viruses and patients with 2019-nCoV will be evaluated and cared for differently than patients with common coronavirus diagnosis.

Q: What is the source of 2019-nCoV?

A: Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of the 2019-nCoV. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. Analysis of the genetic tree of this virus is ongoing to know the specific source of the virus. SARS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from civet cats, while MERS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from camels. More information about the source and spread of 2019-nCoV is available on the [2019-nCoV Situation Summary: Source and Spread of the Virus](#).

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person-to-person. It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Learn what is known about the [spread of newly emerged coronaviruses](#).

Q: Is 2019-nCoV the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS virus?

A: No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. The recently emerged 2019-nCoV is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

However, genetic analyses suggest this virus emerged from a virus related to SARS. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: Visit the [2019-nCoV Prevention and Treatment](#) page to learn about how to protect yourself from respiratory illness like 2019-nCoV.

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has 2019-nCoV?

A: There is information for [people who have had close contact](#) with a person confirmed to have, or being evaluated for 2019-nCoV infection available online.

Q: Does CDC recommend the use of facemask in the community to prevent 2019-nCoV?

A: No. CDC does not currently recommend the use of face masks among the general public. While limited person-to-person spread among close contacts has been detected, this virus is not currently spreading in the community in the United States.

Medical Information

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that 2019-nCoV can cause?

A: Current symptoms reported for patients with 2019-nCoV have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Read about [2019-nCoV Symptoms](#).

Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: If you develop a fever¹ and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your recent travel or close contact. If you have had close contact² with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your close contact and their recent travel. Your healthcare professional will work with your state's public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for 2019-nCoV.

Q: How do you test a person for 2019-nCoV?

A: At this time, diagnostic testing for 2019-nCoV can be conducted only at CDC.

State and local health departments who have identified a [person under investigation \(PUI\)](#) should immediately notify CDC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to report the PUI and determine whether testing for 2019-nCoV at CDC is indicated. The EOC will assist local/state health departments to collect, store, and ship specimens appropriately to CDC, including during afterhours or on weekends/holidays.

For more information on specimen collection see [CDC Information for Laboratories](#).

Q: What should healthcare professionals and health departments do?

A: For recommendations and guidance on patients under investigation; infection control, including personal protective equipment guidance; home care and isolation; and case investigation, see [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#). For information on specimen collection and shipment, see [Information for Laboratories](#).

Public Health Response and Current Situation

Q: What is CDC doing about 2019-nCoV?

A: This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and CDC will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available. CDC works 24/7 to protect people's health. It is CDC's job to be concerned and move quickly whenever there is a potential public health problem. More information about [CDC's response to 2019-nCoV](#) is available online.

Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in the United States?

A: This is a rapidly evolving situation and the [risk assessment](#) may change daily. The latest updates are available on the [2019 Novel Coronavirus website](#).

Q: Has anyone in the United States gotten infected?

A: Yes. The first infection with 2019-nCoV in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The first confirmed instance of person-person-spread with this virus in the U.S. was reported on January 30, 2020. See the [current U.S. case count of infection with 2019-nCoV](#).

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?

There is still a lot that is unknown about the newly emerged 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and how it spreads. Other coronaviruses have emerged previously to cause severe illness in people (MERS and SARS). 2019-nCoV is more genetically related to SARS than MERS, but both are betacoronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we don't know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, we can use the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely a low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperature. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of 2019-nCoV associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of 2019-nCoV in the United States associated with imported goods. Information will be provided on the [2019 Novel Coronavirus website](#) as it becomes available.

Travel

Q: Is it safe to travel to China or other countries where 2019-nCoV cases have occurred?

A: The situation is evolving. Stay up to date with [CDC's travel health notices related to this outbreak](#). These notices will be updated as more information becomes available.

Q: What if I recently traveled to China and got sick?



A: If you were in China and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should

- Seek medical advice – Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

CDC does have additional [specific guidance for travelers](#) available online.

2019-nCoV and Animals

Q: What about animals or animal products imported from China?

CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading 2019-nCoV in the United States. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) play distinct but complementary roles in regulating the importation of live animals and animal products into the United States. [CDC regulates](#) animals and animal products that pose a threat to human health, [USDA regulates](#)  animals and animal products that pose a threat to agriculture; and [FWS regulates](#)  importation of endangered species and wildlife that can harm the health and welfare of humans, the interests of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, and the welfare and survival of wildlife resources.

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and 2019-nCoV?

While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?

Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with 2019-nCoV, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet.

Footnotes

¹Fever may not be present in some patients, such as those who are very young, elderly, immunosuppressed, or taking certain fever-lowering medications. Clinical judgment should be used to guide testing of patients in such situations.

²Close contact is defined as—

- a. being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters), or within the room or care area, of a novel coronavirus case for a prolonged period of time while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection); close contact can include caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a novel coronavirus case. – *or* –
- b. having direct contact with infectious secretions of a novel coronavirus case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

See CDC's [Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)

Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Considerations when assessing close contact include the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk) and the clinical symptoms of the person with novel coronavirus (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient). Special consideration should be given to those exposed in health care settings.

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