**Health alerts - Coronavirus**

The coronavirus (2019-nCoV)has caused an outbreak of respiratory illness and pneumonia in Wuhan, China. Symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. The outbreak originated among stall holders and people who visited the Huanan / South China Seafood Wholesale Market. Some of the latest cases had no links to the market, and there is evidence of limited human-to-human transmission. Cases have been confirmed in people who travelled from Wuhan to Shenzhen, as well as to Japan and Thailand, but there has been no further spread in those locations.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that while there is evidence of limitedhuman-to-human transmission, currently there is no clear evidence of sustained transmission between people. Whilst some health-care workers have been infected, the indication are that infection is not transmitting easily between people.

The WHO and International SOS are monitoring the situation, and based on the available information, WHO advises against any travel restrictions.

Some countries are now screening people arriving from China at their ports of entry (airports, ports, railways), and it is anticipated more countries will increase surveillance.

It is important that people are:

* aware of the current situation
* avoiding wet markets and contact with animals
* practicing general hygiene
* avoiding contact with sick people
* monitoring for updates
* NOT travelling if sick
* aware of who to contact if they develop symptoms of illness

**1** [WHO Coronavirus](https://idesk.bt.com/health-topics/,DanaInfo=www.who.int,SSL+coronavirus) [see over]

**2** INTERNATIONAL SOS webinar [see over]

BT Health Safety Wellbeing CoE is keeping a close eye on this situation as it evolves and will continue to update you with any new information that we receive.

**Sourced:**

* BT HR Home. (2020). *Health alerts.* Available: <https://idesk.bt.com/en-gb/safety-wellbeing/self-help-resources/guidance-about-specific-health-concerns/,DanaInfo=hr.bt.com,SSL+health-alerts>. Last accessed 23 January 2020.
* INTERNATIONAL SOS. (2020). *Novel coronavirus.* Available: <https://www.internationalsos.com/newsroom/news-releases/novel-coronavirus-c--travel-disruption-and-situation-update-jan-23-2020>. Last accessed 23 January 2020.

1

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people.  Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

On 31 December 2019, the WHO China Country Office [was informed](https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/) of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology (unknown cause) detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) [was identified](https://www.who.int/csr/don/12-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-china/en/) as the causative virus by Chinese authorities on 7 January.

On 10 January, WHO published a range of interim guidance for all countries on how they can prepare for this virus, including how to monitor for sick people, test samples, treat patients, control infection in health centres, maintain the right supplies, and communicate with the public about this new virus.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

Based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend any restriction of travel or trade. Countries are encouraged to continue strengthening their preparedness for health emergencies in line with the International Health Regulations (2005).

2

**Novel coronavirus International SOS webinar 23 January 2020.**

Wuhan in China, 100 cases a day, epicentre of outbreak – reached out to Bangkok, Hong Kong, USA. Screening in some countries and restricted travel to Wuhan. Suspected case, incubation period of up to 14 days.

Source still not known, animal/seafood possibilities.

**ACTION** – in Wuhan everyone must wear masks, shut down some transport, discouraged travel in/out. If (you) feel sick particularly with a very high temperature and suspect that you have been with someone who recently visited the Wuhan part of China – ring GP/NHS locally rather than attend a clinic to get further advice – do not worry or overreact, virus’s come and go.

It is expected to “fizzle out”, we do not have a specific vaccine to counter it, it is very slightly possible that it will break in to a full blown pandemic [with most countries around the world having cases] this is unlikely because of the type of virus.

**ADVICE** – if you have a pandemic plan [BT Group do] get it out and brush it off just in case; find out if any employees have been to Asia recently and advise them to look after their own welfare but do not panic them.

Collated Derek Maylor 23 January 2020

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