**Novel coronavirus**

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**Level:** Advisory  
**Location:** China, Hong Kong (China SAR), Macao (China SAR)  
**Category:** Coronavirus

Latest update: Additional fatalities. More cases in mainland China, new case in Macao. WHO to convene a meeting to determine if outbreak is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

A novel (new) coronavirus has caused an outbreak of pneumonia in China. Other viruses in this family cause MERS and SARS. The outbreak originated among stall holders and people who visited the Huanan / South China Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan. There is evidence of human-to-human transmission, including among healthcare workers. Cases have been confirmed in people who travelled from Wuhan to other locations in China including; Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai, as well as to other countries/territories to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand and United States (for more information see the medical alerts for the individual locations). So far, there does not appear to be transmission between people in locations outside mainland China.

International SOS is monitoring the situation closely. Travellers are advised to pay attention to general hygiene, avoid contact with sick people and avoid wet markets. Reconsider travel if you are sick. Anyone with symptoms of pneumonia, which include high fever and shortness of breath should seek medical attention.

**Advice**

Do the following:

- Do not visit wet markets or farms.
- Keep some distance from people who are obviously sick.
- Maintain good personal hygiene.
- Wash your hands frequently. Carry hand sanitiser for use when soap and water are not readily available.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid direct contact with animals (live or dead) and their environment. Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with droppings.
- Ensure food, including eggs, is thoroughly cooked.
- Seek medical attention if you develop symptoms, especially fever or shortness of breath.
- Reconsider travel if you are sick - note that some locations have implemented screening, and travellers may face quarantine and testing.

**More detail**

A new strain of coronavirus, 2019-nCoV has been confirmed in over 440 people in China. At least nine deaths have been reported. Chinese authorities report that at least 13 provinces (including autonomous regions and municipalities) are affected. The most common symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. The majority of cases have reported mild symptoms however, several patients have been classified with severe illness. Thousands of contacts have been tracked, more than 1,390 people are currently under monitoring, and over 800 have completed their monitoring period without developing illness.

The majority of cases (over 270) have been reported in Hubei province, mainly in Wuhan. At least 17 cases have occurred in Guangdong province. There is reported evidence of human-to-human transmission in both Hubei and Guangdong provinces.

There are at least 11 other locations in China where 2019-nCoV has been detected, many have had a travel history to Wuhan, these include: Beijing, Chongqing, Hunan, Henan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Shanghai, Shandong, Tianjin, Zhejiang province, Yunnan. Cases have also been detected in Macao (SAR) and Taiwan.

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises against any travel restrictions and has not recommended any specific measures for travellers to China. The WHO will convene a meeting under the International Health Regulations on 22 January, to determine whether this outbreak meets the threshold of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and provide recommendations.

Travellers from Wuhan to Japan, South Korea, Thailand and United States have been confirmed with 2019-nCoV.

**Background**

The first case was reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province on 12 December, and subsequently the new virus was identified on 8 January. Forty-one cases were further identified in Wuhan many of whom worked at the Huanan / South China Seafood Wholesale Market which contains live animals. The market was closed on 1 January for environmental sanitation and disinfection. Environmental samples from the market have tested positive for the 2019-novel coronavirus. By mid-January, the virus was detected in people across a number of locations in China and internationally, most of whom had a travel history to Wuhan.

**Enhanced screening in several countries / territories**

Travellers from affected locations may be subject to enhanced screening measures when entering other countries / territories. Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States and Vietnam have activated additional screening at their ports of entry; including airports, seaports or railways (where applicable).

**For more information:**

- See the medical alerts for Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and United States.
- See the "2019-nCoV" page on the Pandemic Information website (log in required).
Assessment

There is increasing evidence of human-to-human transmission, including infection of healthcare workers. Transmission to people in close, unprotected contact is possible. Further cases are expected as more countries strengthen their surveillance and detection capabilities.

The situation is rapidly evolving. Chinese authorities and international experts continue to investigate the routes and extent of transmission and update guidance.

With increased travel over the Lunar New Year holiday period, a rise in cases and affected locations is likely.

Advice for managers

Ensure your staff are:

- Aware of the current situation and monitoring for updates.
- Aware and taking preventive measures.
- NOT travelling if sick.
- Aware of who to contact if they develop symptoms of illness.

Consider:

- Distributing awareness materials.
- Your response, should a case be identified amongst your employees.

Disclaimer

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