



2019 Novel Coronavirus

Updated January 24, 2020: Information is still evolving rapidly and BPHC will update this information as new and relevant information becomes available.

What is the 2019 novel coronavirus?

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new strain of coronavirus, first detected in Wuhan, China. It has not been previously known to spread in humans. Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) are examples of coronaviruses.

How is the 2019-nCoV spread?

When the outbreak in Wuhan, China began, many patients reported links to a large seafood and animal market. This suggested that it was spread from animal to people. However, a growing number of patients reportedly have not had exposure to animal markets, suggesting person-to-person spread is occurring. Currently, it's unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people. When other coronaviruses like MERS and SARS spread between people, it is thought to have happened when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread.

What are the signs and symptoms of the 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms include fever and respiratory illness, such as cough and difficulty breathing. In severe cases, infection can cause bronchitis, pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. Symptoms of 2019-nCoV may be similar to the flu. Preliminary information suggests that older adults and people with underlying health conditions may be at increased risk for severe complications from this virus.

How can the 2019-nCoV be prevented?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to the virus. BPHC always recommends standard precautions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Using alcohol-based hand rubs and gels.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- Staying home when you are sick.
- Covering your cough or sneeze.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

If you traveled to Wuhan in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a health care provider's office or emergency room, call ahead and 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. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

What can travelers do to protect themselves and others?

CDC recommends avoiding nonessential travel to Wuhan. If you must travel:

- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Older adults and travelers with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease and should discuss travel to Wuhan with their health care provider.

How is the 2019-nCoV diagnosed?

If you have symptoms consistent with 2019-nCoV virus and have traveled to Wuhan, China in the past 14 days, your health care provider will test you for the virus. If you experience symptoms and have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for 2019-nCoV infection, contact your health care provider. Health care providers should get a detailed travel history from patients with fever and acute respiratory illness.

How is the 2019-nCoV treated?

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for the 2019-nCoV infection. People infected with 2019-nCoV should receive supportive care and help to relieve symptoms. People who think they may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV should contact their health care provider immediately.

BPHC is working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control. For more information, call BPHC at 617-534-5611.

Health care providers in Boston should immediately notify BPHC at 617-534-5611 if they suspect a patient is infected with 2019-nCoV. Providers outside of Boston should contact MDPH at 617-983-6800. CDC has created criteria to guide evaluation of patients suspected to have 2019-nCoV. This can be found here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>.

