

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



Outbreak of pneumonia started in Wuhan, China

Background

December 30

- First cases reported
- Most initial cases were associated with South China Seafood Market
- Some human to human transmission

January and later

- Identified as novel (new) coronavirus, was termed 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- Virus renamed as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
- Disease renamed as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What are coronaviruses?

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some can infect people.
- Some cause mild illness, such as strains responsible for some common colds.
- Others can potentially lead to severe, or even fatal, disease – such as Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), which continues to circulate in some parts of the world.
- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is also a coronavirus. It caused severe and fatal disease in 2002-03, however, is no longer in circulation.

About coronaviruses

- The natural reservoir for coronaviruses is thought to be animal hosts.
- New strains emerge from this reservoir, infect an 'intermediate' host, and from there infect people.
- The viruses may then be capable of being transmitted from one person to another.

- Some are efficient at human-to-human transmission, while others are not.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Most cases are mild. Symptoms start like many other illnesses and include

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches
- Diarrhoea



Symptoms may appear as early as one day after exposure but may take as long as 14 days. Monitor your health.

Some patients may not show any symptoms. Severe disease can occur in people with underlying conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Seek immediate medical attention if you think you have been exposed or develop symptoms.

How is it spread?

Investigations are ongoing.

- Most people are being infected from other people.
- It probably spreads the same way as colds and flu – through droplets which are created when we talk, cough and sneeze.
- People can get infected when these droplets enter the nose, eyes or mouth.
- Touching contaminated objects puts the droplets onto your hands. If you touch your face the droplets can enter your nose / eyes / mouth.

Stay home if you are sick. Cover your coughs and sneezes.

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Other modes of spread:

- Travellers brought the virus into other countries. Some people who were in contact with these travellers also got infected.
- Like other coronaviruses, originally the virus probably spread from a “reservoir” in animals in the Wuhan live animal market, to people.
- Some other coronaviruses have spread through faeces, and COVID-19 might also spread this way.

How is it diagnosed?

As symptoms resemble other illnesses, tests are needed to confirm diagnosis – blood test and throat swab.

How is it treated?

- There is no specific treatment
- Patients receive supportive care to relieve symptoms and prevent complications
- Severe cases require hospitalisation
- No specific antiviral therapy
- No vaccine



There is no vaccine against COVID-19.

Prevention

Avoid potential exposure. Ensure good hygiene measures and safe food practices.

- Maintain good personal hygiene.
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
 - Use alcohol-based hand sanitiser when soap and water are not readily available.
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes.
 - Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose and mouth).

- Keep some distance from people who are obviously sick – don’t let them cough or sneeze on you. Do not share food, drinks and personal items.

Avoid activities where you are likely to be exposed to large groups of people.

Other preventive measures:

- Do not visit wet markets or farms.
- Avoid direct contact with animals (live or dead) and their environment. Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with droppings.
- Avoid contact with stray animals – cats, dogs, rodents, birds and bats.

There is no evidence presently that pets (like cats and dogs) can spread COVID-19.

- Ensure food, including eggs, is thoroughly cooked.
- Do not travel if you are sick. Note that some locations have implemented screening, and travellers may face quarantine and testing.
- Some health authorities are advising flu vaccination for anyone over 6 months of age, as this will reduce the risk of seasonal flu and possible confusion with COVID-19 symptoms.

Disclaimer: This document has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your medical professional.

