

Important Public Health Alert

Novel coronavirus

Date: 27 January 2020

Key Points

- Consider novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection in patients with fever and respiratory symptoms who recently travelled to anywhere in China.
- Investigate and manage patients for respiratory illness using standard practices.
- For severe respiratory illness, transfer to Emergency Departments for investigation.
- Contact your [Public Health Unit](#) for advice on suspected cases including diagnostic testing and specimen collection.
- Queensland Health has launched a [web page](#) with information for both healthcare workers and the public.

Background

- There has been an outbreak of a novel (new) coronavirus (2019-nCoV) originating in Wuhan, China.
- There is evidence of human-to-human transmission and some hospital workers have been infected.
- There is not enough information yet to determine the incubation period, the rate of infection or the source of the virus.

Assess symptoms and exposure history

Does the patient meet the following criteria?

As the full clinical spectrum of illness is not known, clinical and public health judgement should be used to determine the need for testing in patients who **do not** meet the clinical criteria below.

If the patient satisfies the epidemiological AND clinical criteria (listed below), they are classified as a **suspected case**:

Epidemiological criteria

Travel to Wuhan City (Hubei Province, China) in the 14 days before the onset of illness.

OR

Travel to an area with evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission, or a declared outbreak, within 14 days before onset of illness.

OR

Close contact of a confirmed case of 2019-nCoV in the 14 days before illness onset.

Clinical criteria

Fever or history of fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) and acute respiratory infection (sudden onset of respiratory infection with at least one of: shortness of breath, cough or sore throat).

OR

Severe acute respiratory infection requiring admission to hospital with clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome (i.e. even if no evidence of fever).

NB: The above criteria are provisional only. They will be revised by public health authorities over time as more precise information emerges on the outbreak



including characteristics of transmission, incubation and infectivity period and geographical spread. Updated information will be communicated when available.

Actions for patients who meet criteria

<p><i>Personal Protection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place a surgical mask on the patient Isolate patient in a single room Use standard plus contact plus droplet precautions including a disposable fluid resistant gown, gloves, surgical mask, and eye protection while reviewing the patient Airborne precautions, i.e. a P2/N95 mask and eye protection must also be used while collecting specimens. Private laboratory collection centres are able to collect specimens if required; please call ahead before sending the patient to the collection centre. 	
<p><i>Seek Advice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately contact your local Public Health Unit if you encounter a suspected case. 	
<p><i>If following discussion it is decided that the patient does not require hospitalisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local public health unit will provide advice on the exact specimens required for specialised testing to identify whether the patient has novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Refer to the Public Health Laboratory Network (PHLN) website for further information including routine tests to rule in or out possible alternate causes for the patient's illness. As a general rule collection of all three specimen types (not just one or two of the three), i.e., lower respiratory (sputum); upper respiratory (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs); and serum specimens for testing is recommended for specialised testing Also, request testing for alternative causes including for other respiratory pathogens that might also potentially explain the patient's clinical presentation using multiplex PCR Request a chest x-ray if clinically warranted. Please ring ahead to notify radiology if this is a suspected case and ensure the patient is masked. 	<p><i>If following discussion it is decided that the patient does require hospitalisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange transfer to the appropriate public hospital emergency department – please call ahead.

Additional information

Department of Health will provide regular updates as more information on this situation becomes available: www.health.gov.au

For additional information on novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) visit the World Health Organization website: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

Queensland Health communicable disease control guidance 2019-nCoV website <http://disease-control.health.qld.gov.au/Condition/837/2019-ncov>

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