

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Factsheet for schools and early learning centres

Last updated 26 January 2020

An outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was detected in Wuhan, China in late December 2019. Cases have been reported predominantly in the city of Wuhan, in the Hubei province of China, as well as some other Chinese cities and countries, including one confirmed case in Victoria, Australia.

What is this virus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The virus seen in Wuhan, China is called 'novel' because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people infected live in, or travelled to, Wuhan, China. There have been cases of 2019-nCoV reported in other Chinese provinces and other countries. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include fever and cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath.

What if I have a student or staff member who has been to Wuhan, China or other countries with cases in the last 14 days?

In accordance with national public health guidelines and current information about the coronavirus from the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer and the World Health Organization, **exclusion of well children or staff from school or early childhood services who have travelled to Wuhan, China, or any other areas where there have been reported cases, is NOT required** unless the following applies:

- The person is a confirmed case of novel coronavirus
- The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus in past 14 days.

If you think a child, student or staff member may meet one of the above criteria please call the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to discuss further actions on 1300 651 160.

What if I have a student or staff member who is sick within 14 days of being in Wuhan, China or other countries with cases?

If the student or staff member has a fever, sweats, or chills:

- The student or staff member will need to be urgently excluded from school until reviewed by a doctor
- Where necessary, call the student's parents or guardian to inform them of the need to exclude the child for urgent medical review
- If the school is arranging transport for a child/staff member to a medical facility, call ahead to inform them the patient has been in Wuhan, China and ensure the travel history is given to the facility on arrival.

If the student or staff member has severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath:

- Call 000 and request an ambulance, and
- Inform the paramedics that the patient has been in Wuhan, China.

How can we help prevent the spread of 2019-nCoV?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence. Encourage all students and staff to:

- wash hands often with soap and water
- cough and sneeze into your elbow

Where can I get more information?

For Victorian updates to the current incident, go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>

For national updates: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus>

For international updates: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>

WHO resources <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

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