

Coronavirus fact sheet

What is a Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses from common colds to more severe diseases. The viruses received their name due to their crown-like shape. Recently, a new strain of coronavirus (COVID-19) has been identified in humans, originating in Wuhan, China.

Like the flu, the virus is believed to be spread from person-to-person via:

- droplets within the air produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- direct contact with an infected person
- touching objects or surfaces contaminated from droplets (coughing or sneezing) of an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face.

Early investigations suggest the **transmission of coronavirus can occur prior to symptoms appearing**, making isolation for travellers from overseas and contacts of confirmed, and suspected cases, important.

With the coronavirus being novel (new), much is still to be learned about the virus, its transmission and severity.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Common signs of coronavirus are similar to symptoms of a cold or the flu, and can include:

- fever
- cough
- running nose
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- difficulty breathing
- fatigue.

In more severe cases, infection can lead to:

- pneumonia
- severe acute respiratory syndrome
- kidney failure
- death.

Symptoms can appear anywhere from 2 to 14 days after exposure.

Anyone can contract the virus, however individuals that are elderly, very young children and babies, or people with pre-existing medical conditions (e.g., people with compromised immune systems, heart and lung conditions) may be more vulnerable to becoming seriously ill if infected with the virus.

What to do if you become unwell



If you become unwell, and suspect you have symptoms of coronavirus, you must:

- seek immediate medical attention
- ring ahead to book an appointment and inform the healthcare provider of your:
 - symptoms
 - travel history or close contact with someone identified with a proven case of coronavirus.

If a medical professional diagnoses you with a suspected case of coronavirus, inform your employer immediately.

Coronavirus cannot be spread from:

- food
- packages from China
- walking past someone in the street.

There is currently no need to make any extreme changes to your normal routine. But you should practice good hygiene.

We can all take steps to minimise the spread of coronavirus

- Frequently wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, scrubbing for 20 seconds, and completely dry.
- Sneeze and cough into your flexed elbow, or tissues which can be immediately thrown into a sealed bin. Wash hands immediately after.
- If you have recently travelled, ensure you follow any border restrictions and conditions as outlined by NSW Health.
- Stay 1.5 metres from people you don't live with.
- Avoid unnecessary travel, especially if you have a cough or fever.
- Take steps to maintain your immune system, by keeping up your physical self-care:
 - healthy diet
 - good quality sleep
 - regular exercise.
- Seek medical care if you experience:
 - fever
 - cough, sore throat, or headache
 - difficulty breathing.

Five steps to hand washing



1. Wet hands with clean, running water, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap. Lather:
 - the back of your hands
 - between your fingers
 - under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean running water.
5. Dry your hands thoroughly, using a clean towel or air dryer.

When to wash hands



- Before, during and after preparing and eating food
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After using the toilet
- After changing nappies or cleaning a child
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After touching garbage
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

Employer tips

Workplace attendance

- Advise employees to consult with [smarttraveller.gov.au](https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au) before planning international travel.
- Inform any employees with exposure to infected individuals to work from home, and encourage isolation for 14 days following exposure.
- Send employees that are sick home.
- Advise employees to research current border restrictions and conditions before travelling domestically.

In the workplace environment, provide:

- liquid soap, especially in key areas (including toilets, kitchen and rubbish areas) and encourage proper hand washing techniques
- disposable paper towels or functioning hand dryers
- alcohol-based hand sanitiser when proper soap and water hand washing is not possible
- bins that can be sealed.

For cleaners, provide, and encourage use of:

- gloves
- hand sanitiser
- disinfectants for common surfaces

Consider:

- flexible working arrangements (working from home)
- updating policies for fitness for work, travel rules, and workplace hygiene protocols
- providing employees with reassurance and support as needed, including the use of employee assistance programs.

Contact



For further information:

- Call the **Coronavirus Health Information Line** 1800 020 080
Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm, Saturdays 8am – 5pm, and Sundays 9am to 5pm
- **Public Health Information Line** 1800 004 599
- **Health Direct** 1800 022 222
- **NSW Public Health Authority** 1300 066 055
- **Department of Health website** www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov
- **NSW Health website** www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx
- **Safe Work Australia website** www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/node/10981

If you are concerned for your health, seek medical care early

- Contact the **emergency department** or your **GP** if you feel you may have been exposed to the virus, or if you:
 - Travelled from Hubei Province, China, within the last 14 days
 - Travelled through the mainland of China, within the last 14 days
 - You have been come into contact with someone identified as a proven case of coronavirus.

In contacting your GP or the emergency department, you should ring ahead, and you must inform the healthcare provider of your recent travel history or close contact history and arrange an urgent assessment.

Avoid public transport.

- If you experience serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call **000**.