

Novel Coronavirus Update 06 March 2020

Background:

On the 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) China country office reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China (1). On 7 January 2020, the causative pathogen was identified as a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

What is Coronavirus

A coronavirus is a kind of common virus that causes an infection in your nose, sinuses, or upper throat. Most coronaviruses are not dangerous.

Coronaviruses were identified in the 1960s, but it is not known where they came from.

After the December 2019 outbreak in China, the World Health Organization identified a new type, 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) which can be fatal. WHO named this disease COVID-19. The virus was first decoded by Scientist Leo Poon who said it is most likely that the virus started in an animal and later spread to humans.

It is confirmed that coronavirus can spread between humans. Mode of spread for coronavirus is mainly by large respiratory droplets and direct and indirect contact with infected secretions.

The virus quickly moved from China around the World as a result WHO declared coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Incubation period

Current estimates of the incubation period range from 2-10 days.

Case Definition of Coronavirus (who are suspected cases)

- Fever of $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$
- A documented travel history to Wuhan
- Close physical contact with a person from Wuhan, Hubei Province China

Symptoms:

- Fever of $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and headaches
- Difficult breathing in some cases
- Potential of severe disease and death

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment for disease caused by a novel coronavirus.
- Treatment is based on the patient's clinical condition.
- Moreover, supportive care for infected persons can be highly effective.

WHO Recommendations:

General recommendations for personal hygiene, cough etiquette and keeping a distance of at least one metre from persons showing symptoms remain particularly important for all travellers. These include:

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, cover your nose and mouth with a flexed elbow or paper tissue when coughing or sneezing and disposing immediately of the tissue and performing hand hygiene;
- Refrain from touching mouth and nose;
- **A medical mask is not required if exhibiting no symptoms, as there is no evidence that wearing a mask – of any type – protects non-sick persons. However, in some cultures, masks may be commonly worn. If masks are to be worn, it is critical to follow best practices on how to wear, remove and dispose of them and on hand hygiene after removal.**

Suspect case

A. Patient with severe acute respiratory infection (fever, cough, and requiring admission to hospital),

AND with no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation

AND a history of travel to or residence in China during the 14 days prior to symptom onset,

OR

B. Patient with any acute respiratory illness **AND** at least one of the following during the 14 days prior to symptom onset:

a) contact with a confirmed or probable case of 2019-nCoV infection, **or**

b) worked in or attended a health care facility where patients with confirmed or probable 2019-nCoV acute respiratory disease patients were being treated.

Recently Returned Travelers from China

If you were in China 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 doctor'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 to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available

Travel Advice

- WHO does not recommend any specific health measures for travelers. Countries may implement health questionnaire and screening on arrival at destination.
- Airport staff will practice management of communicable disease procedures at the airports.
- Cabin crew will make announcements for countries that require health questionnaire and/or health screening on arrival.
- Cabin crew will practice Management of communicable diseases on board procedures in case of suspected cases.
- **Watch your health for 14 days after leaving China. If you develop a fever, cough, or have difficulty breathing, seek medical care right away.**
- In case of symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness either during or after travel, the travelers are encouraged to seek medical attention and share their travel history with their health care provider.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for 2019-nCoV infection. People infected with 2019-nCoV should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

South African Airways follow International Air Transport Association guidelines for both onboard and on the ground. Ref below: