

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Factsheet for schools and early learning centres

Last updated 29 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 two confirmed cases 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 Hubei Province, China is called 'novel' because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people infected live in, or travelled to, Hubei Province, 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, cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath. Symptoms can take up to 14 days to develop.

What if I have a student or staff member who has been to Hubei province, China in the last 14 days?

All students and staff members who have travelled to Hubei Province, China, are advised to stay at home and avoid public settings, including attendance at schools and early learning centres, until 14 days after last being in Hubei Province, China.

Children and staff who are well and have travelled to other provinces in China, or any other areas where there have been reported cases, are NOT recommended to be excluded from schools and child care services 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 the 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 Hubei Province, China or another part of China?

If the student or staff member has a cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath:

- The student or staff member will need to be urgently excluded from school and be 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 advise that there has been travel to China, and whether this included travel to Hubei Province.

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

- Call 000 and request an ambulance, and

- Advise the paramedics that there has been travel to China, and whether this included travel to Hubei Province.

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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