



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Disease basics

**Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?**

A: The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

**Q: What is a novel coronavirus?**

A: A novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified.

**Q: What is the source of 2019-nCoV?**

A: Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of the 2019-nCoV. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. Analysis of the genetic tree of this virus is ongoing to know the specific source of the virus. SARS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from civet cats, while MERS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from camels.

**Q: How does the virus spread?**

A: This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person-to-person. It is important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. At this time, it is unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people.

**Q: Is 2019-nCoV the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS virus?**

A: No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. The recently emerged 2019-nCoV is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). However, genetic analyses suggest this virus emerged from a virus related to SARS. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

## Prevention

### Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, includes:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are sick
- stay home when you are sick
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

### Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has 2019-nCoV?

A: If you have had close contact with someone who is confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, 2019-nCoV infection, you should:

- monitor your health starting from the day you first had close contact with the person and continue for 14 days after you last had close contact with the person. Watch for these signs and symptoms:
  - fever. Take your temperature twice a day
  - coughing
  - shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - other early symptoms to watch for are chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose
- **if you develop fever or any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away**
- **before** going to your medical appointment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your close contact with someone who is confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, 2019-nCoV infection. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected. Ask your healthcare provider to call the health department or National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)
- if you do not have any symptoms, you can continue with your daily activities, such as going to work, school, or other public areas

## Medical information

### Q: What are the symptoms and complications that 2019-nCoV can cause?

A: Current symptoms reported for patients with 2019-nCoV have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

### Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your recent travel or close contact. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently travelled from this area, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your close contact and their recent travel. Your healthcare professional will work with the health department and NICD to determine if you need to be tested for 2019-nCoV.

**Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in South Africa?**

A: There are currently no reported cases of 2019-nCoV in South Africa. This is however a rapidly evolving situation and the risk may change daily. Regular updates will be provided by the Department of Health and NICD.

**Q: Has anyone in South Africa been infected?**

A: No.

**Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?**

There is still a lot that is unknown about the newly emerged 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and how it spreads. Two other coronaviruses have emerged previously to cause severe illness in people (MERS and SARS). 2019-nCoV is more genetically related to SARS than MERS, but both are betacoronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we do not know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, we can use the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of 2019-nCoV associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of 2019-nCoV associated with imported goods.

## Travel

**Q: Is it safe to travel to China or other countries where 2019-nCoV cases have occurred?**

A: Travellers should avoid all non-essential travel to China.

- There is an ongoing outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that can be spread from person-to-person.
- Chinese officials have closed transport within and out of Wuhan and other cities in Hubei Province, including buses, subways, trains, and the international airport. Other locations may be affected.
- Preliminary information suggests that older adults and people with underlying health conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease from this virus.

The situation is evolving. This notice will be updated as more information becomes available.

**Q: What if I recently traveled to China and got sick?**

A: If you were in China and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should:

- seek medical care right away. Before you go to a clinic, 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 sanitiser if soap and water are not available

## 2019-nCoV and animals

### **Q: What about animals or animal products imported from China?**

There is no evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading 2019-nCoV in South Africa. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

### **Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and 2019-nCoV?**

While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. It is recommended that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in South Africa might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

### **Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?**

Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with 2019-nCoV, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet.