

Novel Coronavirus Update: February 4, 2020

► Learn about a new and emerging respiratory disease and what you can do to help protect yourself and your family.

Background

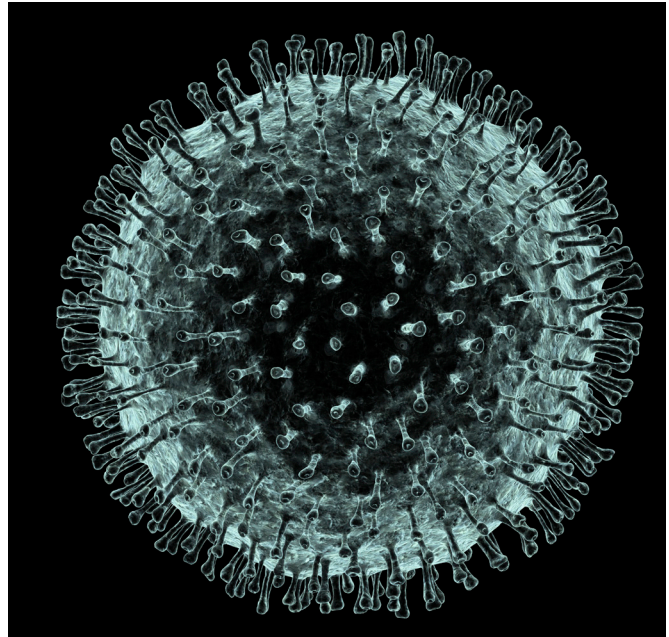
An outbreak of a respiratory disease caused by a coronavirus and designated as 2019-nCoV has begun to spread throughout China. It was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province. Isolated infections in humans in other parts of the world, including the United States, have also occurred, although the number of US cases remains low as of early February. All of the US cases involve people who have traveled in the affected areas of China or, in one case, a person with prolonged contact with a traveler from the affected area.

The genetic makeup of the Wuhan virus indicates the likelihood that this novel (meaning newly identified) virus is related to other coronaviruses found in bats and other mammals as well as the coronavirus responsible for SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), first identified in 2003.

Epidemiological data to date indicates the likelihood that many of the early patients had some type of association (e.g., workers or spouses of workers) with a large seafood and animal market in Wuhan. Available data leads public health officials in China and the United States to believe that the first infection(s) were likely caused by virus transfer from animal(s) to human(s), possibly through the inhalation of viral particles present in contaminated dust and biological debris. Subsequent infections by later patients indicate that person-to-person transmission has occurred through the usual pulmonary routes (i.e., sneezing, coughing, sputum, and mucous), spreading the disease into human populations not associated with the market.

Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that cause a wide range of respiratory infections in mammals, humans, and birds. The virus group is responsible for other serious respiratory diseases, including SARS and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). Coronaviruses of several varieties regularly circulate in human populations of both adults and children. As a group, coronaviruses are also responsible for a large



percentage of common cold infections, which occur in the fall and spring of each year. These infections usually include symptoms such as fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, sore throats, and dry nonproductive coughs. Occasionally, more severe symptoms occur, including bronchitis, viral pneumonia, or bacterial pneumonia, which occurs as a secondary infection.

Although common colds usually resolve without complication in approximately 10 to 14 days in healthy adults and children, deaths do occasionally occur, primarily in the very young, the very old, or in individuals who have other underlying medical conditions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has indicated that patients with the 2019-nCoV infections have ranged from those with no or mild symptoms to people who are severely ill or dying. Mortality figures are hard to access but to date indicate that a high percentage of healthy adults will survive infection. Recurrence (reinfection) rates are unknown at this time. Reported symptoms include fever (ranging from elevated to high), cough (mild to severe), and shortness of breath. Chinese public health officials believe that symptoms can occur as early as 2 days to as late as 14 days after exposure.

Treatment and Prevention

Currently, there are no approved coronavirus vaccines or antiviral drugs. Best practices for prevention include staying away from people or animals experiencing respiratory infections, carefully practiced hygiene (washing hands and disinfecting potentially contaminated surfaces), and self-quarantine for individuals experiencing nonlife-threatening symptoms. Interim guidance for care of patients not requiring hospitalization for respiratory infections that may be caused by 2019-nCoV is available from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-home-care.html.

Travel and Safety

If you have recently traveled from China or have been around others who have traveled through affected areas and believe you are infected with the virus, contact your health provider immediately. Surveillance of inbound passengers from Asia is currently being conducted at multiple international airports in the United States.

The CDC has designated a Level 3 Warning—Avoid Nonessential Travel. Updates are available at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/novel-coronavirus-china.

The US State Department has designated a Level 4—Do Not Travel Advisory. Updates are available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/china-travel-advisory.html>.

Food Safety

Until more is known about the full range of transmission possibilities for the disease, individuals from the United States traveling in China, especially in surrounding affected areas, should avoid consumption of both cooked, uncooked, and undercooked exotic meats.

Travelers in all parts of the world should diligently practice good food and water safety precautions. CDC food and water safety guidelines for travelers are available at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/food-water-safety.

In areas where person-to-person transmission has occurred or is occurring, potentially infected individuals should avoid handling food materials as food can mechanically transmit the virus should the handler inadvertently contaminate the food with mucus and/or sputum or from a sneeze or cough. Viral particles, possibly including coronavirus particles, can be transitory agents found in feces. Although fecal and oral transmission of the virus is possible, without new information, this route of transmission is considered negligible compared to respiratory transmission.



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