

A Note From the President

Hi Kate,

Anxiety is mounting as many news programs continue to show videos of travelers in masks and airport staff screening travelers with handheld thermometers. What exactly is the threat of the new Coronavirus? For more information we went to two trusted authorities: [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#). These websites are monitoring the situation closely, and they are providing updates in a timely manner.

HISTORY

On December 31, 2019, WHO was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The virus did not match any other known virus. One week later, on January 7, 2020, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had, indeed, identified a new virus. The new virus is a Coronavirus, which is a family of viruses that include the common cold, and viruses such as SARS and MERS. This new virus was temporarily named “2019-nCoV.”

SYMPTOMS

Those who have been confirmed to be infected with the Coronavirus have displayed a variety of reactions -- from having little or no symptoms at all, to being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Available information suggests that older adults and persons with underlying health conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease. Symptoms of the Coronavirus may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

LOCATIONS

Confirmed Coronavirus cases have been found in the following locations (as of Jan 24, 2020)

- China
- Hong Kong
- Macau
- Taiwan
- Australia
- Cambodia
- Canada
- France
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Nepal
- Singapore
- Thailand
- The Republic of Korea
- United States
- Vietnam

TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

At this time the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travelling to Hubei Province, China, including Wuhan. Chinese officials have cancelled many public events and closed transport within and out of many cities in Hubei Province, including buses, subways, trains, and the airport. There is limited access to adequate medical care in the affected areas.

Because of the ease of transmission of the flu or the Coronavirus, both the CDC and WHO recommend that travelers follow these safe travel behaviors:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid contact with sick people.

- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands.
- Discuss travel to China with your healthcare provider-older adults and travelers with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease.
- Avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).

CORONAVIRUS vs INFLUENZA

Both WHO and China health officials admit that the current understanding of the Coronavirus remains limited, most cases reported to date have been milder, with around 20% of those infected experiencing severe illness. Better understanding of the transmissibility and severity of the virus is urgently required to guide other countries on appropriate response measures.

Here in the U.S., there is a greater health risk present with the influenza outbreak.

Since October 2019, the CDC reports that nearly 20,000 people in the US have died of influenza. The Coronavirus, meanwhile, has infected more than 4,500 people worldwide and the death toll is 106.

At least 15 million Americans have had the flu in the last four months; nearly a quarter million of them went to the hospital. Since flu season peaks between December and February, the worst could be still to come.

If you have flu-like symptoms and need medical assistance, please call your local health care provider and be sure to mention if you may have been exposed to the Coronavirus.

Regards,

Megan Frankel
President

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