

AFAO, ASHM, NAPWHA Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) sector release

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afao AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF AIDS ORGANISATIONS
Leading the community response to HIV

napwha national association of people with HIV australia



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Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine

What is 2019-nCoV?

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses can infect humans and can cause respiratory, liver, gut and neurologic disease.

How is it spread?

Coronavirus experts think that it's likely that the novel coronavirus originated in an animal species, and then spread to humans. Person to person spread of the novel coronavirus has been reported, but it is not yet understood how easily this happens. Sustained person to person spread outside of China isn't being reported yet.

The 2019-nCoV is most likely spread from person to person by coughing or contact with respiratory secretions.

Everyone is at risk, but individuals whose immune systems are compromised (for example, people with HIV who have a low CD4 count), infants and the elderly may be particularly vulnerable.

What are the symptoms?

Current reported symptoms include runny nose, headache, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fever and a general feeling of being unwell.

How to protect yourself?

The World Health Organization provides standard recommendations to reduce the risks of contracting a range of illnesses which apply to 2019-nCoV. These include:

- Clean your hands frequently by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- When coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw the tissue away immediately and wash hands;
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever or cough.

If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical care early and share your previous travel history with your health care provider. While you are seeing your doctor check if you need any other vaccinations for pneumonia (Pneumovax) or hepatitis.

People recently travelling from Hubei province in China who have fever or respiratory symptoms should phone their General Practice or hospital Emergency Department prior to attending in person. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has stated that phoning ahead is essential to limit possible human to human transmission.

What happens to people who have been exposed to n-CoV?

Information and reports of infections are evolving daily. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) currently believes that most infections are transmitted from people who are showing symptoms of the disease. Advice to the Australian community from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia at the time of the writing is:

1. People who have been in close contact with any confirmed 2019-nCoV cases must be quarantined in their home for 14 days after last contact with the confirmed case;
2. Returned travellers who have left, or transited through, mainland China **on or after 1 February 2020** must be quarantined in their home for 14 days after leaving mainland China, other than for seeking individual medical care.
3. People who have travelled from Hubei Province within the past 14 days, must be quarantined in their home until 14 days have elapsed since leaving Hubei Province.

Will the influenza vaccine protect me from 2019-nCoV?

There is no evidence to suggest that influenza vaccines are effective in the prevention of transmission of 2019-nCoV. However, influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent seasonal influenza.

I am on anti-viral medications - will they protect me from 2019-nCoV?

Governments and health organisations are working to find an effective treatment for 2019-nCoV and there have been recent reports indicating successes with some HIV treatments. To date there is not sufficient evidence to indicate that these are broadly effective in treating 2019-nCoV. Being on a current anti-viral medication including treatment for HIV (including PrEP), hepatitis C or hepatitis B **are not guaranteed to provide protection** from 2019-nCoV.

I am on HIV treatment and have an undetectable viral load? What does this mean for my susceptibility to 2019-nCoV if I come into contact with it?

A low or undetectable viral load indicates that your antivirals are working to suppress your HIV. If your CD4 count is above 500 you are unlikely to be at risk of opportunistic infections and your risk of contracting 2019-nCoV is similar to the rest of the population.

People with a history of opportunistic infections related to HIV or AIDS defining illnesses, but who have a current undetectable viral load, should take special care to avoid exposure to 2019-nCoV.

Be vigilant and consult a healthcare provider if in doubt – especially if you have been around someone who has travelled overseas recently. Look after yourselves and those around you.

What if I'm caring for someone who has a compromised immune system?

Anyone who has been in contact with any confirmed 2019n-CoV cases must be quarantined in their home for 14 days following exposure.

If you are concerned about exposure to someone with a compromised immune system and you have no symptoms yourself, or don't believe you've been exposed to the virus, the precautions outlined above from the WHO are the best protection.

If you're caring for a person who has a compromised immune system, it's important to take extra care with handwashing and infection precautions. If you are unwell in any way, it is best to avoid contact with the person while you are unwell.

For ongoing and up to date information, please refer to the Australian Government Department of Health website here: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

Public Health Information Hotline

Call the Public Health Information Hotline in the event of a health emergency or incident affecting the public.

1800 004 599

The National Association of People with HIV (NAPWHA) is Australia's peak non-government organisation representing community-based groups of people with HIV (PLHIV). The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) is the peak national organisation for Australia's community HIV response. The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) is the peak organisation of health professionals in Australia and New Zealand who work in HIV, viral hepatitis, other BBVs and sexually transmissible infections.