

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Issues Document

Feb. 5, 2020

Summary

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new respiratory virus that has healthcare professionals on alert. Since the outbreak was first associated with the Huanan seafood and live animal wholesale market in the city of Wuhan, China, on Dec. 31, 2019, the disease has spread internationally – mostly due to travel from the infected area. The first U.S. case of the virus was reported on Jan. 20, 2020 and several more have appeared around the country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is monitoring 2019-nCoV, closely, as it works to keep health providers and the public informed. This document is intended to provide some additional information about 2019-nCoV.

Highlights

- 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has been associated with respiratory symptoms, including progression to severe respiratory illness in some patients.
- Human cases of 2019-nCoV were first identified in the area of Wuhan, China. However, other countries, including the United States, now have confirmed cases. To date, international spread of the virus primarily has been associated with travel from Wuhan and surrounding areas.
- While the initial viral transmission was thought to be from animal to human, person-to-person transmission has been observed. The first U.S. person-to-person transmission case was reported on Jan. 30, 2020.
- No vaccines currently protect against 2019-nCoV infection and no drugs are approved to treat it.
- The best preventive measure is to avoid exposure. Additionally, prevention includes washing hands, avoiding sick individuals and staying home when sick.
- **Stay informed.** The latest information can be found on the CDC's website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>

Coronavirus background

Coronaviruses are a common virus group that affects many different species of animals. Rarely, they evolve to infect and spread between humans. Scientists are aware of seven strains of coronavirus that can infect people. Usually, they cause mild symptoms such as runny noses and coughing that can be treated easily. Although most human coronavirus infections generally cause mild to moderate symptoms, two strains, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus ([MERS-CoV](#)) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus ([SARS-CoV](#)), previously have been associated with the development of severe illness. 2019-nCoV is similar to MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV.

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

2019-nCoV is a new and emerging respiratory coronavirus that has healthcare professionals on alert. First reported on Dec. 31, 2019, the initial outbreak was associated with the Huanan seafood and live animal wholesale market in the city of Wuhan, China. Subsequently, it has spread internationally in small outbreaks due to travel from the area. The first U.S. case of the virus was reported in Washington State on Jan. 20, 2020.

The complete clinical picture with regard to 2019-nCoV is not fully understood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes that symptoms of 2019-nCoV may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 after exposure to the virus, usually starting with a fever, followed by a dry cough. However, symptoms can vary, ranging from few or none in some individuals, but progressing to severe acute respiratory infections in others. The CDC, the World Health Organization (WHO) and multiple other health agencies are monitoring it carefully, not only to track it, but also to try and contain its extent. For the latest information about 2019-nCoV in the United States, please see the CDC's website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>

Prevention

Although pharmaceutical companies, universities and government agencies around the world are working to develop vaccines effective against 2019-nCoV, no vaccines currently are available. The best way to prevent infection with it or any infectious condition is to avoid exposure.

To avoid being infected, the CDC also reminds everyone to take simple preventive measures, including:

1. Cover coughs or sneezes.
2. Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth.
3. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
4. Stay home if you are sick.
5. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
6. Disinfect frequently touched objects, such as cellphones and countertops.

People who think they may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV or who have symptoms, such as coughing or fever, of a viral illness should contact their healthcare providers immediately. **But, before going into a doctor's office or emergency room, they should call ahead and tell the facility about their symptoms and any recent travel.** If they are instructed to visit a facility, they should wear facemasks, inform reception personnel upon arrival and stay as far away from other patients as possible.

Treatment

All people who have 2019-nCoV should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. Fever can be reduced with acetaminophen, for example; and antihistamines or decongestants may relieve coughing. Patients also may need rehydration and some may need oxygen. Symptoms are mild or moderate for most individuals, and they seem to resolve fairly quickly. Severe infections may need intensive care, though, which could involve a ventilator to maintain breathing, drugs to sustain adequate blood pressure and therapies to prevent complications, such as blood clots.

No antiviral treatments are indicated for treating 2019-nCoV infection. However, drugs approved for other viral illnesses and some still in development have been used in patients with severe cases of 2019-nCoV. Some healthcare providers have used more than one drug to try and stop the virus from dividing at different stages of the replication cycle.

Healthcare Professionals

Diagnosing and isolating potentially infectious patients are essential to prevent unnecessary exposures among patients, healthcare personnel and visitors at healthcare facilities. Identifying additional individuals who are not sick but who may have been exposed also is important. The CDC has provided interim guidance for healthcare professionals at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>

Travel Recommendations

For current information on rapidly evolving travel advisories, check the CDC's Novel Coronavirus Information for Travelers website, found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Stay Informed

Information regarding the 2019-nCoV is changing quickly. To access the most up-to-date information, please refer to CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>

The World Health Organization (WHO) also has a 2019-nCoV information webpage, found at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Express Scripts Recommendations

Everyone should follow practical recommendations for prevention of infectious diseases. Individuals who have traveled recently in China or who may have been in contact with someone who has 2019-nCoV should be aware of its symptoms and should report immediately to their healthcare provider if they begin to show symptoms they may have the virus. They should **not** go to a doctor's office, urgent care or emergency room, however, without calling the facility for instructions. Health professionals should identify and isolate patients with 2019-nCoV as soon as possible. Basic supportive treatment should be given.

Stay up to date with the latest information regarding 2019-nCoV infections in the United States at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: 2019-nCoV is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, China. A new strain of coronavirus, it has been associated with a risk of developing severe respiratory disease.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: While 2019-nCoV likely emerged from an animal source, cases of person-to-person transmission have been reported. However, at this time, it's unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people.

Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in the United States?

A: The risk of a severe case is low. As local outbreaks occur, however, risks may change frequently. The latest updates are available on CDC's 2019 Novel Coronavirus website, found at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html#risk-assessment>

Q: Is there a vaccine?

A: No vaccine protects against 2019-nCoV. While vaccine development efforts are underway, the availability of the first experimental vaccine appears to be at least a few months away.

Q: How can I help protect myself and others?

A: The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to the virus. The CDC also recommends standard preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory virus. These tips can be found at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

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. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

Q: Has anyone in the United States been infected?

A: Yes. The first infection with 2019-nCoV in the United States, reported on January 21, 2020, was associated with travel from the infected area of China. The first confirmed instance of person-person-spread in the U.S. was reported on January 30, 2020. The current count of 2019-nCoV infections in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

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

A: The situation is rapidly evolving and several airlines have suspended flights into and out of cities with major numbers of cases. For the latest travel recommendations, please refer to the CDC's Novel Coronavirus Information for Travelers website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Resources

American Medical Association. Public Health. <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health>. Undated. Accessed Feb. 5, 2020.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2019 Novel Coronavirus. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Last reviewed Feb. 4, 2020. Accessed Feb. 5, 2020.

Saplakoglu Y. How experts plan to treat the new coronavirus. Live Science. <https://www.livescience.com/possible-treatments-new-coronavirus.html>. Feb. 6, 2020. Accessed Feb. 6, 2020.

World Health Organization. Clinical management of severe acute respiratory infection when novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is suspected. Interim guidance. <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/clinical-management-of-novel-cov.pdf>. Jan. 28, 2020. Accessed Feb. 6, 2020.

World Health Organization. Novel 2019 Coronavirus. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>. Undated. Last accessed Feb. 5, 2020.