



# 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Bermuda

## What is 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The new, or “novel” coronavirus, now called COVID-19, had not previously been detected before the outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

## Are public health personnel in Bermuda monitoring the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU) within the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health regularly monitors communicable diseases and syndromes that may impact Bermuda and works with regional public health partners including the Caribbean Public Health Agency ([CARPHA](#)), the Pan-American Health Organization ([PAHO](#)) and Public Health England ([PHE](#)) to prepare for and respond to disease threats. The ESU also remains abreast of updates from the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and acts upon the relevant recommendations.

## Can people in Bermuda get COVID-19?

This virus is not spreading in Bermuda right now, but the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Currently there are no confirmed cases in Bermuda and the greatest risk of infection is for people in areas with ongoing transmission. Although travelers from most affected areas will likely receive multiple screenings before arrival to Bermuda, the Ministry of Health and its many health partners, including personnel at our ports of entry, are implementing measures to detect potential cases of novel coronavirus.

## Can I travel to China or other known countries with ongoing transmission of COVID-19?

There are no travel restrictions put in place by the World Health Organization at this time. However, as of 30

January 2020, the WHO has declared the coronavirus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). As such, affected countries/cities may limit travel to and from their jurisdictions, and all countries will be required to consider their own risks and resources to establish travel and trade guidelines. Even if travel is not restricted, non-essential travel to the affected areas should be avoided at this time.

## What will happen if I enter Bermuda having been to China or other known countries with ongoing transmission of COVID-19?

Airport personnel will ask all travelers about their travel history over the last 21 days. It is important that travelers are truthful to protect their health and the health of others in Bermuda.

If you have a relevant travel history, you will be referred to a health officer for a discussion of risk and protective measures which may include public health monitoring for up to 14 days. This may include daily temperature taking and self-quarantine (avoiding contact with other persons by staying at home or other accommodation).

If you arrive at our airport and have a relevant travel history and are showing symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing), you will be referred to a health officer for isolation and assessment in a private room.

## Can I go back to work or school if I have been to China or other known countries with ongoing transmission of COVID-19?

Following a discussion with a health officer, you will be advised on return to work or school based on the level of risk. This is a complex decision and is determined on a case-by-case basis. Persons who are advised to self-quarantine should not attend work, school, or public gatherings and should not ride public transportation.

## What should I do if I think I may have been in contact with someone with COVID-19?

Monitor your health from the first day you had close contact with a person through 14 days after last contact

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with the person. If you develop fever and other respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath, you should contact your healthcare provider immediately and mention your recent travel or other exposure.

#### Should I wear a mask?

Wearing a medical mask can help limit the spread of some respiratory diseases. However, using a mask alone is not guaranteed to stop infections and should be combined with other prevention measures including hand washing, covering your cough and avoiding close contact with ill persons. Ideally, masks are best used for persons with respiratory symptoms (coughing and sneezing) and should be changed as soon as it is damp and not re-used.

#### Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating new coronavirus?

The new coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment, as antibiotics only work against bacteria. However, persons with viral respiratory illnesses may receive antibiotics because bacterial co-infection is possible.

#### Do vaccines such as the seasonal influenza vaccine and vaccines against pneumonia protect against COVID-19?

Although vaccines for other respiratory illnesses do not provide protection against the new coronavirus, it is highly recommended to be vaccinated to protect your health. Protecting yourself against influenza, and other respiratory illness, also protects against increases in hospital admissions.

#### Does the COVID-19 affect older people or are younger people also at risk?

People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus (COVID-19). Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

#### What steps can I take to protect myself from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

WHO advises people of all ages to take steps to protect themselves from COVID-19 and other viruses causing respiratory illnesses by following good hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Washing your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water kills the virus if it is on your hands.
- Maintain social distancing – maintain at least one metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever. When someone who is infected with a respiratory disease, like COVID-19, coughs or sneezes they project small droplets containing the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the virus.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces which can be contaminated with the virus. If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Call ahead and tell your healthcare provider/facility if you have travelled in an area where COVID-19 has been reported, or if you have been in close contact with someone with who has travelled from an affected area and has respiratory symptoms. Whenever you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing it's important to seek medical attention promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Respiratory symptoms with fever can have a range of causes, and depending on your personal travel history and circumstances, COVID-19 could be one of them.

If you have mild respiratory symptoms and no travel history to or within China, carefully practice basic respiratory and hand hygiene and stay home until you are recovered, if possible.

Adapted from:

Q&A on coronaviruses. World Health Organization, 2020. Retrieved 3 February 2020 from:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

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