

Coronavirus: What You Need To Know

What is the novel coronavirus?

You may have heard about the virus that is infecting people in China, and further afield, described as the novel coronavirus. That is because it is a new strain of a known virus, called coronavirus, that can spread from person to person, like a cold or flu. The virus started in the city of Wuhan, China, but has since spread to other countries.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are similar to a cold or the flu and can include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- headaches
- breathing difficulties
- shortness of breath.

In some people it can cause pneumonia and a sudden, serious respiratory infection and kidney failure.

What should I do if I think I have it?

If you have recently returned from overseas or been in contact with someone who has recently returned from overseas, or someone who has the virus, and you feel unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

1

Call free phone Healthline on 0800 611 116. It is important you describe your symptoms, as well as any recent overseas travel, in detail. Healthline will tell you what to do.

2

If you have a mild flu-like illness you should stay home, care for and isolate yourself and consider seeing a GP if you have a long-lasting fever of 38 degrees or higher and a cough.

3

If you have severe symptoms you should seek immediate medical attention in isolation, that is, you should call the clinic before coming in. The clinic will advise you about what to do.

Clinic contact details can be found at localdoctors.co.nz and whitecross.co.nz

How can I reduce my risk of getting sick?

If someone you know becomes ill after arriving in the country, avoid close contact with them. As a matter of routine, you should also:

- wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub often, especially before eating or touching your face
- not share food, drinks or utensils (knives, forks, chopsticks, pens, lipsticks, toothbrushes, etc)
- avoid handshaking, hongi and kissing until the outbreak has passed.

How can I stop spreading a virus to others?

If you become ill with any flu or cold, the best ways to stop spreading viruses to others includes:

- staying at home and keeping yourself away from others
- washing your hands often
- cough or sneeze into a tissue or at least cover your mouth and nose
- blow your nose into a disposable tissue then wash your hands
- do not share food or utensils
- avoid handshaking, hongi and kissing.

There is no vaccine to protect you from this virus and there is no cure for the infection, but there are ways to manage your symptoms.