



There is currently an outbreak of a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, Hubei Province China.

The risk to workers at the Australian border is considered relatively low.

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a type of virus that can affect humans and animals. Some coronaviruses cause illness similar to the common cold while other coronaviruses cause more serious illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

The novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is primarily affecting people who have recently been in the city of Wuhan, China, or had contact with sick people from Wuhan.

What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms of 2019-nCoV include fever, cough, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires prompt medical attention.

What is Australia doing?

Consistent with recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), no mass temperature screening measures will be implemented at this time. To capture ill travellers who may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV, the Department of Health has included additional questions on the Traveller with Illness Checklist (TIC) for biosecurity officers to administer. The Department of Agriculture is in contact with airlines to ensure compliance with pre-reporting requirements of ill travellers.

The Department of Health is also providing additional communication material for travellers at all international ports. This material informs travellers of the symptoms of 2019-nCoV and encourages them to report to biosecurity officers if they are experiencing symptoms while in the port environment if arriving from China.

The Australian Department of Health is closely monitoring this situation in collaboration with the WHO and the states and territories, and will keep border agencies informed.

Border workers should continue to follow existing processes for screening ill travellers arriving at our international air and sea ports using the updated TIC. This includes identification of ill travellers, isolation and referral to human biosecurity officers where indicated.

How can I reduce my risk?

Border staff should continue to follow existing agency infection prevention work instructions when in contact with ill passengers. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when recommended by agency work instructions.

If interviewing an ill traveller arriving on a flight from a 2019-nCoV risk area, you may wish to wear a mask, gloves and eye protection in accordance with your workplace guidance.



While the infection does not currently appear to spread easily between people, the following measures will also help reduce the risk further:

- Practise and promote frequent handwashing.
- Where possible, stay 1 metre or more away from travellers who are ill.
- Practise and promote good respiratory (cough) etiquette.
- Undertake appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities.
- Use of PPE if close contact with an ill traveller is required.

Border staff working at the primary line, biosecurity bag inspection areas and other areas of the air and sea ports are not considered to be at a high risk¹. PPE is only recommended when assisting in the processing of ill travellers.

For general infectious diseases advice and information, please refer to the Department of Health *Infectious Disease Information Sheet for Border Staff*.

What should I do if I develop symptoms?

There is no need for alarm, however, the 2019-nCoV outbreak is an emerging concern. If you develop symptoms, see a doctor, call ahead and describe your profession as a border worker with possible contact with travellers from risk areas. If you are coughing, ask for a medical mask to wear while you are at the doctor.

You should also:

- Wash your hands frequently
- Use good cough etiquette – cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash your hands afterwards
- Inform your manager of your symptoms

Other information

While 2019-nCoV is of concern and we remain vigilant, it is currently influenza season in the northern hemisphere. It is more likely that travellers displaying infectious symptoms have a common respiratory infection, rather than 2019-nCoV.

¹ Frequent handwashing and cough etiquette should still be practiced in this setting.