

Novel coronavirus, China (2019-nCoV) - Border Advisory (5) - 2 February 2020

Dear Colleagues

This is the fifth border advisory relating to the novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV. These Border Advisories are available on the Ministry of Health's website, along with guidance, fact sheets and updates. We encourage you to keep checking the Ministry's website for updated information at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-china-2019-ncov>

Since the first reported cases in late December, an outbreak of 2019-nCoV has been on going in Mainland China with the epicentre being Hubei Province, China. There have been variable numbers reported, but the outbreak has continued to be mainly geographically contained.

Risk Assessment: On 31 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) advised that the outbreak now meets the criteria for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

On 1 February 2020, the Australian Government announced strengthened border measures. They advise that all foreign travellers who have left or passed through mainland China in the last 14 days would be denied entry into Australia, including transit passengers. Australia has also raised its official travel advice for China to "do not travel". These announcements were made following advice from the Australian Chief Medical Officer. For more information refer to the Australian Government Department of Health's website at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-update>.

The New Zealand Ministry of Health considered:

- the likelihood of limited person-to-person transmission is moderate and the likelihood of sustained transmission, and widespread outbreaks, is low, although it may be high in some settings (e.g. institutions, aged care facilities etc)
- that there is evidence to date which suggests human-to-human transmission and that there may be some transmission prior to the development of symptoms
- the timely and robust management of both cases and their contacts will limit the spread of disease.

The Ministry of Health's current assessment of the health situation relating to 2019-nCoV is there has been both rapid observed and projected increases in cases across China. However, it does appear that this infection is only severe and life-threatening for a minority of those infected.

It is important to note this is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and that this risk assessment may change as more information on the 2019-nCoV and its epidemiology becomes available.

Objectives of the New Zealand response: The primary objectives of the Ministry of Health's response to 2019-nCoV are:

- to identify and investigate cases/clusters of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and to apply appropriate infection control measures to prevent its spread
- to detect cases/clusters of 2019-nCoV infection and prevent transmission in high risk settings (i.e., hospitals)
- to apply infection prevention and control practices, including basic respiratory hygiene, to minimise the transmission risk of respiratory infections, including infections by 2019-nCoV
- to prevent sustained outbreaks of 2019-nCoV in the New Zealand community.

Changes to the New Zealand Border Response as of 2 February 2020:

The Ministry of Health's Technical Advisory Group has advised that New Zealand should align our border response with Australia.

The Ministry of Health's updated advice as at 2 February 2020 is:

- to extend the travel history in the case definition for novel coronavirus infection to include travel to mainland China (previously this was Hubei province in China, particularly Wuhan)
- to substantially reduce the volume of travellers coming from mainland China by implementing additional border measures to deny entry into New Zealand to people who have left or transited through mainland China from 2 February 2020, with the exception of:
 - New Zealand citizens (including those from the three Countries of the Realm: Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands), permanent residents and their immediate family
 - Air crews who have been using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). This also applies to passengers transiting in New Zealand, unless they are New Zealand citizens, permanent residents or their immediate families.
- As at 2 February 2020, all travellers arriving out of mainland China (not just Hubei Province) should self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the time they leave mainland China. More information is available on the Ministry of Health website.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has increased the travel advisory to level 4: do not travel to any part of mainland China.

Note: This is to confirm that the new border measures are NOT retrospective. The requirement for aircrew to wear PPE only applies after the date and time the measures take effect. PPE is not required on the flight deck or in crew areas. Masks and gloves are sufficient PPE for passenger areas.

Based on our understanding of the current Australian border health measures, it is proposed that our border measures will align as closely as possible:

- Flights from mainland China will continue to be met. Public health staff will be present at the Auckland and Christchurch International Airports to provide information to travellers on flights from or through mainland China. These staff are not undertaking screening or clinical assessments of all arrivals at this point. A public health nurse will be available to take the temperature of any passengers who report they are not well. If the passenger's temperature is over 38°C, this will trigger the usual ill traveller response protocol.
- In addition to the above current measures, health staff will advise passengers to self-isolate for 14 days. Passengers will be given information about what self-isolation means i.e. no return to work or school, no attending social functions or mass gatherings, but freely able to continue daily activities within their home environment. Refer to the information on Ministry of Health's website.
- Any passenger with an elevated temperature will be managed according to the ill traveller protocol.

While these measures are not exactly the same as the Australian measures they align closely and reflect the level of risk to New Zealand.

Vessels arriving into New Zealand:

For any voyage greater than fourteen days and with a crew with no symptoms - no action is required. Cruise vessels with passengers who have joined within 14 days of being in mainland China asked for passengers to begin self-isolation while on board.

Passengers from mainland China within 14 days will be managed as for airline passengers.

Pratique process: The master of any ship is required to notify the local Medical Officer of Health through the pratique process if they suspect any person on board has a notifiable infectious disease. Masters must notify if there are any passengers or crew on board with symptoms of concern. Once pratique has been granted, the master must still notify the local Medical Officer of Health if any passengers or crew have symptoms of concern (as this may indicate the person has a notifiable disease). If vessels arrive in New Zealand from mainland China, for a voyage over 14 days, no additional action is required.

Cruise Lines International Association has advised the suspension of crew movements from mainland China and, effective from 31 January 2020 to deny boarding those guests or crew who have recently travelled from or through mainland China in the previous 14 days.

The Ministry of Health will be working closely with other agencies to implement these measures.

Personal Protection for Border Staff:

The advice on the use of personal protective measures is as follows:

Precautions for frontline staff

If you work in an area with high passenger flow, there are steps you can take to reduce your chance of respiratory infection. This is especially important if you are interacting with passengers or crew who have travelled from or through China. The advice from WHO and the Ministry of Health is:

- avoid close contact with people suffering acute respiratory infections
- frequently wash hands, especially after contact with ill people or their environment
- avoid close contact with sick live farm animals or wild animals
- when coughing, maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands afterwards.

Staff are also required to follow these infection control processes:

- When staff are required to wear gloves (for example when conducting personal searches) nitrile gloves should be worn. Ensure you remove your gloves with the correct technique, and dispose of gloves in a MPI quarantine bin, or if this is not readily available in a standard rubbish bin.
- be conscious of not taking gloved hands or ungloved hands to your eyes, nose or mouth and use a thorough handwashing technique
- before and after wearing gloves wash your hands using the correct technique or immediately use the antiseptic gel at your work station
- if there is droplet contamination of an area (eg. from coughs), use sodium hypochlorite spray to disinfect the area and dispose of wipes in designated bin. Note, normal clean wipes are not the same as antiseptic sodium hypochlorite and will not remove viruses.
- If staff caring for the very young, elderly or people with compromised immune systems have any concerns, please speak to your line manager.

Border staff who are working in situations that meet all three of the below requirements should wear a mask and gloves. A surgical/medical mask is acceptable:

- They have come from mainland China in the last 14 days **and**
- you are going to be with the passenger longer than 15 minutes (for example when staff are conducting personal search activities) **and**
- you are within 1 metre of the passenger.

This is to confirm that the new border measures are NOT retrospective. The requirement for aircrew to wear PPE only applies after the date and time the measures take effect.

The PPE being worn by the aircrew on the flight bringing back the people assisted to depart from Wuhan is gloves and masks while in passenger areas. PPE is not required on the flight desk or in crew areas.

Please refer to the Ministry of Health website for the latest information on personal protective measures.

Please refer to the Ministry of Health website for the latest information on 2019-nCov
<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>