

**Date:** Thursday, January 23, 2020  
**To:** All Physicians and Front-Line Clinical Staff  
**From:** Medical Officers of Health, Alberta Health Services  
**Subject:** Overview of Wuhan novel Coronavirus

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On December 31, 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in Hubei province, China, issued a public statement that they had identified an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause. This is now believed to be caused by a novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV). As of January 22, 2020, there are 440 cases in China (mostly in Wuhan) along with isolated cases in South Korea, Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, and United States. Chinese authorities have reported evidence of person-to-person spread, and some healthcare workers in China have developed a nCoV respiratory illness. That being said, nCoV remains rare and a respiratory illness in a traveler returning from China is likely caused by more common pathogens like influenza.

**Currently, there are no reports of confirmed cases of infection in Canada of 2019-nCoV.**

Severe illness from 2019-nCoV is possible, and there have been reported deaths in China. However, many patients have had milder illness, which possibly suggests that 2019-nCoV is not as severe as MERS-CoV or SARS.

Alberta Health Services has established a leadership group that is actively monitoring the situation and is ensuring that all steps are being taken to protect the public and healthcare workers should there be any cases in Alberta.

**Recommendations for Healthcare Providers:**

If you suspect your patient may have 2019-nCoV, please do the following:

- a) Have patient don procedure mask immediately, and place in a separate area with [Contact and Droplet Precautions](#) as soon as possible.
  - Care providers should don appropriate Contact & Droplet PPE (e.g., gloves, procedure mask, eye protection and gowns if available). Use airborne precautions if performing an aerosol-generating medical procedure.
- b) Take a thorough travel/exposure history from patients with acute respiratory conditions. Patients are at highest risk if they meet any of the below criteria:
  - Travelled to Wuhan, China within 14 days prior to onset of symptoms;
  - Had contact with a suspected or confirmed case of 2019-nCoV within 14 days prior to onset of symptoms;
  - Within 14 days prior to onset of symptoms, visited a hospital/healthcare facility known to have treated confirmed 2019-nCoV cases.
- c) Call your Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH) - contact information can be found here: [www.ahs.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/if-hp-phys-clin-moh-on-call-contact-information.pdf](http://www.ahs.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/if-hp-phys-clin-moh-on-call-contact-information.pdf)
- d) After patient leaves, clean room and medical equipment using routine cleaning agents.
- e) Settling time for rooms is not required after patient leaves.
- f) Notify Infection Prevention & Control at your site, if applicable.

**Lab Testing and Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Resources:**

- [www.ahs.ca/assets/wf/lab/wf-lab-bulletin-novel-coronavirus-detected-in-wuhan-china.pdf](http://www.ahs.ca/assets/wf/lab/wf-lab-bulletin-novel-coronavirus-detected-in-wuhan-china.pdf)
- [www.ahs.ca/info/Page10531.aspx](http://www.ahs.ca/info/Page10531.aspx)

**Additional Reference:**

- [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)