Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Information for parents and schools / early childhood centres regarding students returning from China

An outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in late December 2019.

Advice on Returning to Schools and Early Childhood Centres

If a child has been informed by Public Health authorities that they are a close contact of a confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), they should contact their local Public Health Unit for information.

Parents MUST NOT send their children to school / childcare within 14 days of the child’s departure from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan). Although the risk to children is very low, this is a precautionary approach to ensure the safest possible environment for children. Children do not require a medical certificate or clearance to return to school / childcare but must remain at home until 14 days after leaving mainland China.

If a child has a recent travel history to mainland China and develops symptoms (listed below), they should contact their GP. Their GP will liaise with Public Health Units and determine whether the child needs a medical assessment.

What is this virus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The virus originating in Hubei Province; China is called ‘novel’ because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and/or shortness of breath.

What if a child who has been to mainland China attends school/childcare before the end of the 14 day exclusion period?

The risk of infection with novel coronavirus for other students and staff at the school / childcare centre is very low. Novel coronavirus is spread from person to person through close contact with an infected person or through contact with droplets from an infected person’s cough or sneeze.
There is no requirement for any other students/children or staff at the school to be isolated because of being in contact with the child.

For detailed information on what action the school or childcare facility should take if a child attends within 14 after returning from mainland China, please see the “Advice for schools about self-isolation requirements”

**What if my child is sick now or becomes sick within 14 days of returning from China?**

If your child develops respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and/or shortness of breath, please call your GP. Your GP will liaise with Public Health Units and determine whether the child needs a medical assessment. If you are attending a GP, or require urgent medical assistance at an emergency department, ring ahead and tell them that your child has been to China and is unwell. This will prevent other people at the health service potentially being exposed. If your child is experiencing a life-threatening emergency (such as severe shortness of breath) dial 000.

If your child is diagnosed with 2019-nCoV they must not attend school or childcare until they are cleared by public health authorities. The usual exclusion criteria apply to children with other infective illnesses when 2019-nCoV has been ruled out.

**How can I protect myself and others against the 2019-nCoV?**

- Frequently washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand gel
- Refraining from touching mouth and nose
- If coughing or sneezing, covering your nose and mouth with a paper tissue or flexed elbow. Dispose of the tissue immediately after use and perform hand hygiene and
- Avoiding close contact with anyone if you, or they, have a cold or flu-like symptoms (maintain a distance of at least 1 metre).

**Where can I get more information?**

The WA Department of Health has updated information including frequently asked questions about the novel coronavirus. To view this information, you can visit [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus)

You can also call the national Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080

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