



Work-related health

Workplace preparedness for novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

Minimising the spread of infectious diseases in the workplace is important to keeping staff safe and well at work.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 requires businesses to mitigate health and safety risks and protect their workers from them, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In the event of novel coronavirus (known as COVID-19) emerging in New Zealand, the Ministry of Health has [guidance for infectious disease prevention and control for workplaces\(external link\)](#) which may be useful to protect workers and others now.

You can also read 2019-nCoV-specific information on the [Ministry of Health website\(external link\)](#).

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Workplace infectious disease prevention

Minimising the spread of infectious diseases in the workplace is important to keeping staff safe and well at work.

What is required under the Act

Any infectious disease encountered in the workplace is considered a workplace hazard.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/40.0/DLM5976660.html>) requires that employers take all practicable steps to mitigate risk and protect workers at all times from workplace hazards.

- For more information read WorkSafe NZ's guide: Introduction to the Health and Safety Act (<http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/worksafe/information-guidance/legal-framework/introduction-to-the-hsw-act-2015/special-guide>).
- Read about the three main ways infectious diseases spread: How infectious diseases spread ([/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/infectious-disease-prevention-and-control/how-infectious-diseases-spread](http://your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/infectious-disease-prevention-and-control/how-infectious-diseases-spread))

Ways to protect your workplace

There are a number of actions employers can take to minimise the risk of spreading of infectious diseases in the workplace:

- Encourage workers to follow the basic personal actions to stop the spread of infectious diseases. These include:
 - getting immunised against infectious diseases
 - washing and drying hands regularly and well
 - staying at home if they are sick
 - covering coughs and sneezes.

- Provide immunisations to workers (such as the seasonal influenza vaccine.) [Read about how to get immunised](#) ([/your-health/healthy-living/immunisation](#)).
- Provide appropriate protection to staff who, by the nature of their work, may be required to have contact with people who are sick (for example, health care workers).

Keep workplaces clean

Key cleaning tips

- Schedule regular cleaning.
- Use a suitable cleaning product.
- Use disposable cloths, if available.
- Clean air-conditioning units.

Regular cleaning of the workplace environment will minimise the spread of infection by reducing workers' contact with contaminated surfaces.

Workplace environments vary greatly so it is important to consider your particular work environment and what is frequently used and touched by workers, customers and others.

Clean surfaces with a suitable cleaner and/ or disinfectant and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. When choosing a suitable cleaning product, consider what the product is effective against and the length of time the product needs to be left on a surface to clean it properly.

Where possible, use disposable cloths to clean surfaces. Reusable cloths should be cleaned, disinfected and then dried after use.

Ensure appropriate equipment is available for workers to wash and dry their hands. [Read more about good hand washing](#) ([/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/infectious-disease-prevention/prevent-spread-infectious-disease#hand](#)).

Ensure good ventilation

Enclosed spaces can increase the spread of infectious diseases. Employers should ensure air conditioning systems are well maintained. It is advisable that air conditioning systems do not recirculate air and are vented to the outside as much as possible.

If the workplace does not have an air conditioning system, open windows regularly to get fresh air circulating.

Plan for outbreaks and pandemics

You should consider what extra measures you can take to protect workers in a pandemic, and put appropriate plans in place.

Read our guidance for preparing your workplace for a outbreak or pandemic and how to keep your business operating:

- [Workplace pandemic influenza guidance.](/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/influenza-pandemic/workplace-pandemic-influenza-guidance) (/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/influenza-pandemic/workplace-pandemic-influenza-guidance)
- [Health sector pandemic influenza planning.](/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/influenza-pandemic/health-sector-pandemic-influenza-guidance) (/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/influenza-pandemic/health-sector-pandemic-influenza-guidance)

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Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

In January 2020, Chinese authorities confirmed a new type of coronavirus, known as COVID-19 (formerly known as 2019-nCoV). The Ministry of Health is closely monitoring the situation and following guidance from the World Health Organization. The likelihood of an imported case in New Zealand is high, however the likelihood of a widespread outbreak remains low.

On this page:

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- [Signs and symptoms](#)
- [How it spreads](#)
- [Treatment](#)
- [Advice for travellers](#)
- [What is novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)?](#)
- [Information in New Zealand Sign Language](#)
- [Further information and resources](#)
- [Advice for health professionals](#)

See [novel coronavirus question and answers](#) ([/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-questions-and-answers](#)) for more information.

Current status

There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand to date but the likelihood of importing a case is high. The risk of an ongoing outbreak in New Zealand remains low, but the Ministry of Health is monitoring the situation closely. If any public health measures are needed for New Zealand, we will

How useful did you find this page?

1 2 3 4 5

Not useful at all Very useful

advise.

Latest health advice

Updated 5.30 pm 11 February

This advice is under active review and is updated regularly.

Advice updated as of today includes:

- added a video – [Information in New Zealand Sign Language](#)
- provided the next [Border Advisory update](#).

Dedicated 0800 number for health advice and information

The number is [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) (tel:08003585453) – it is free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Or for international SIMs [+64 9 358 5453](tel:6493585453) (tel:6493585453)

People calling that line will be able to talk with a member of the National Telehealth Service. They have access to interpreters.

You should call that dedicated number:

- For any coronavirus health advice and information and any questions you have about coronavirus, self-isolation etc

There has been a positive uptake of the newly established 0800 number dedicated to novel coronavirus, with people registering via Healthline for follow-up health support.

How useful did you find this page?

Advice about self-isolation 2 3 4 5

Not useful at all Very useful

We have updated our [self-isolation guidance](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-self-isolation) (~~https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-self-isolation~~).

Next

We are working with border agencies to ensure recent arrivals from mainland China are aware of the need to self-isolate and register for health checks through the new Healthline service

For people arriving or transiting through mainland China we ask that you:

- Please register your details with Healthline within 24 hours of arrival
- Self-isolate for 14 days

Please register your details with Healthline while you are in New Zealand. This must include your personal mobile number. We are doing this to provide you with health support while you are in New Zealand.

Call [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) (tel:08003585453) to register.

If you are using an international SIM, call [+64 9 358 5453](tel:6493585453) (tel:6493585453).

Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This means all situations where you may come into contact with others, such as: social gatherings, work, school, child care/pre-school centres, university, faith-based gatherings, aged care and healthcare facilities, prisons, sports gatherings, supermarkets, restaurants, shopping malls, and all public gatherings.

If you are a visitor to New Zealand, this means you should avoid sitting in a restaurant, participating in any type of tour group, or using public transport, including flights, buses, and trains between cities in New Zealand.

If you are unsure if you should be self-isolating, please contact Healthline for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) (tel:08003585453).

Ministry of Health resources

Facebook page

The Ministry of Health now has a [Facebook page: @minhealthnz](https://www.facebook.com/minhealthnz) (https://www.facebook.com/minhealthnz). In addition to our [Twitter channel @minhealthnz](https://www.twitter.com/minhealthnz) (https://www.twitter.com/minhealthnz), we will be using **F**acebook to **1** alert **2** people to **3** key **4** updates and **5** messaging specifically about coronavirus.

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Questions and Answers

The Ministry has developed a [novel coronavirus question and answers page](/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-questions-and-answers) (</our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-questions-and-answers>). As the situation regarding novel coronavirus can evolve rapidly, the questions and answers page will be updated with the latest information.

Updated factsheet for travellers

The information for travellers arriving into New Zealand has been updated with the latest information. It is available in English and simplified Chinese. [See the Advice for travellers page](/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-advice-travellers) (</our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/novel-coronavirus-advice-travellers>).

Signs and symptoms

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to a range of other illnesses such as influenza and do not necessarily mean that you have COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, coughing and difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing can be a sign of pneumonia and requires immediate medical attention. We don't yet know how long symptoms take to show after a person has been infected, but current WHO assessments suggest that it is 2–10 days.

What do I do if I am sick right now?

If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing please telephone Healthline (for free) on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) (tel:08003585453).

Download the latest health advice

- [Latest health advice on novel coronavirus - 11th February 2020 \(PDF, 157 KB\)](/system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-general-public-health-advice-on-novel-coronavirus-11feb2020.pdf)
(</system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-general-public-health-advice-on-novel-coronavirus-11feb2020.pdf>)
- [Latest health advice on novel coronavirus - 11th February 2020 \(Word, 76 KB\)](/system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-general-public-health-advice-on-novel-coronavirus-11feb2020.docx)
(</system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-general-public-health-advice-on-novel-coronavirus-11feb2020.docx>)

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How it spreads

Like the flu, COVID-19 can be transmitted from person to person. The scientific evidence confirms that coronavirus is spread by droplets. This means that when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, they may generate droplets containing the virus. These droplets are too large to stay in the air for long, so they quickly settle on surrounding surfaces.

Droplet-spread diseases can be spread by:

- coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact
- contact with an object or surface with viral particles on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

That's why it's really important to practice good hygiene, regularly wash and thoroughly dry your hands and practice good cough etiquette.

Treatment

As this is a new virus, there is currently no vaccine available

If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing please telephone Healthline (for free) on [0800 611 116](tel:0800611116) (tel:0800611116).

Advice for travellers

As of 2 February 2020, all travellers arriving in New Zealand out of mainland China, or any travellers who have had exposure to a confirmed case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) will be expected to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the time they leave mainland China or were exposed to novel coronavirus.

- [Read more about advice for travellers \(/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-advice-travellers\)](#)

What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?⁵

Coronaviruses are a large and diverse family of viruses which includes the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).
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In January 2020, officials identified a new coronavirus called novel coronavirus or COVID-19.

We don't know yet how COVID-19 is transmitted to people, but it's likely that it comes from an animal. A live animal market in Wuhan is suspected as the original source, but that hasn't been confirmed. There is evidence that COVID-19 can spread from person to person in the community and in health care settings. There have been cases of COVID-19 reported in some other Chinese provinces and countries. Some of these cases have no history of travel to Wuhan.

World Health Organization (WHO) public health emergency declaration

On January 31 2020 the third meeting of the ad hoc Emergency Committee (the Committee) was convened by WHO on the basis of the Committee's advice, regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus COVID-19. The WHO Director-General has declared the outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).

New Zealand's current and planned preparedness and response activities for novel coronavirus are all consistent with the advice from WHO. It is important to note that as the situation continues to evolve, so will the strategic goals and measures to prevent and reduce spread of the infection.

History of COVID-19

On 31 December 2019, China advised the World Health Organization (WHO) of a viral respiratory illness in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. Many initial cases involved people who worked at or were handlers and frequent visitors to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. The Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market has been temporarily closed to carry out environmental sanitation and disinfection.

On 7 January 2020, Chinese authorities confirmed the identification of a new type of coronavirus now known as COVID-19. Laboratory testing ruled out other respiratory pathogens such as influenza, avian influenza, adenovirus, [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus](#) ([our-work/diseases-and-conditions/communicable-disease-control-manual/severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-sars](#)) (SARS-CoV) and the [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus](#) ([our-work/diseases-and-conditions/middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus-mers-cov](#)) (MERS-CoV).

COVID-19 has not previously been detected in humans or animals.

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Information in New Zealand Sign Language

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This sign language video was provided by [Deaf Aotearoa](https://deaf.org.nz/2020/01/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/) (<https://deaf.org.nz/2020/01/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/>). It summarises key information on this page.

Further information and resources

Advice to airline crew

This document provides advice to airlines and customs on what is 'appropriate personal protection equipment' (PPE) and what the airlines can do to prevent the spread of 2019 n-CoV on aircrafts.

- [Advice to airline crew on the use of personal protective equipment \(Word, 71 KB\)](#)
(</system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew-5feb20.docx>)
- [Advice to airline crew on the use of personal protective equipment \(PDF, 170 KB\)](#)
(</system/files/documents/pages/ministry-of-health-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew-5feb20.pdf>)

Posters

- [Protect yourself against coronavirus - poster \(PDF 1.8 MB\)](#)
(/system/files/documents/pages/protect_yourself_against_coronavirus_poster_v5.pdf)
- [Protect yourself against coronavirus - Simplified Chinese poster \(PDF 1.3 MB\)](#)
(/system/files/documents/pages/protect_yourself_against_coronavirus_poster_v5_simplified_chinese.pdf)

World Health Organization

- [WHO website](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus) (<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>) for situation updates and the latest advice.

Border control background information

- [Border health measures](#) (</our-work/border-health/border-health-protection/border-health-measures>)
- [Responding to Public Health Threats of International Concern at New Zealand Air and Sea Ports: Guidelines for public health units, border agencies and health service providers](#)
(</publication/responding-public-health-threats-international-concern/>)

Advice for health professionals

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See the [Resources for health professionals page](#) (</our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals>) for resources and factsheets.

Border advisories

The following border advisories were emailed to border stakeholders.

- [Border advisory - 10 February 2020 \(Word, 448 KB\)](#) (/system/files/documents/pages/novel_coronavirus_-_border_advisory_10_february_2020.docx)
- [Border advisory - 2 February 2020 \(PDF, 117 KB\)](#) (/system/files/documents/pages/novel_coronavirus_-_border_advisory_2_february_2020.pdf)
- [Border advisory - 24 January 2020 \(Word, 19 KB\)](#) (/system/files/documents/pages/novel_coronavirus_-_border_advisory_24_january_2020.docx)
- [Border advisory - 22 January 2020 \(Word, 16 KB\)](#) (/system/files/documents/pages/novel_coronavirus_-_border_advisory_22_january_2020.docx)
- [Border advisory - 6 January 2020 \(Word, 16 KB\)](#) (/system/files/documents/pages/novel_coronavirus_-_border_advisory_6_january_2020.docx)

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