

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS - FAQ

January 23, 2019

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the simple common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). We see many different types of coronaviruses here in York Region, Ontario and Canada.

What is novel coronavirus?

The type of coronavirus found in Wuhan, China is a new (novel) strain, and not found here in Canada. Information about its ability to spread from person to person and the seriousness of this infection are still emerging.

What are the symptoms associated with this illness?

Common symptoms of coronaviruses vary based on the type of coronavirus, but can often include symptoms like fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat and headache.

So far, authorities are reporting that the most common symptoms of the novel coronavirus include: fever, new or worsening cough or shortness of breath.

How are coronaviruses spread?

Known Coronaviruses: These types of coronaviruses are responsible for causing the common cold and can spread from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected person (e.g., in a household, workplace or health care setting) through respiratory secretions (e.g., a runny nose or saliva) and droplets present in the air from coughing or sneezing; or through touching surfaces contaminated with respiratory droplets, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

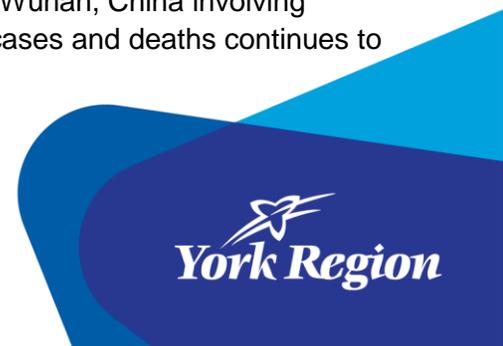
Novel Coronavirus: As this is a new disease, much about it is still unknown. While there is evidence of some person-to-person transmission, it is yet to be confirmed how *easily* the disease spreads from person-to-person; for example if the spread is limited to only close or prolonged contact with a case.

What do we know so far?

As seen in recent media reports, on December 31, 2019, Chinese authorities reported an outbreak of a novel coronavirus originally associated with a local live seafood market in Wuhan, China involving many cases, as well as some deaths. New information on the number of cases and deaths continues to be received on an almost daily basis.

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The majority of cases are reporting mild illness, with a small subset of people reporting more serious illness.

Are there any Canadian cases of novel coronavirus?

The disease is called a novel coronavirus because it is a new type of coronavirus that has not been reported before. Currently, experts believe that the new virus was introduced to humans from an animal source.

The majority of cases of the novel coronavirus are in Wuhan, China. Some cases are being reported in other parts of China, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and the USA, many of which seem to be related to the original outbreak in Wuhan.

There have been no confirmed cases in Canada.

At this time, the risk to York Region residents is low.

What should I be doing to protect myself, family and the community?

All York Region residents, regardless of who you are, can take the following steps to protect themselves not only from new and emerging diseases but also from the common cold and the flu (which are on the rise at this time of year):

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, including between your fingers, under your fingernails and your wrists. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your cough or sneeze using a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve, being sure to cover your mouth. Put used tissue in the garbage and wash your hands after or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until your symptoms resolve
- Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing

At this time, no specific or different action needs to be taken by the public against novel coronavirus.

If you are feeling ill and wish to seek medical attention, try to call in advance to let them know of your symptoms and any recent travel to the affected areas.

If I work at a school or at a child care centre, how can I protect myself and/or my students?

Please follow the steps as outlined above. No additional precautions need to be taken at this point.

Are there any travel advisories?

At the moment, there is no travel advisory for Wuhan, China, but if you are going to Wuhan specifically, some advice has been provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada which you can access at this site: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories/pneumonia-china>.

What is York Region Public Health doing?

York Region Public Health is closely monitoring the outbreak of viral pneumonia in Central China and working closely with the Ontario's Ministry of Health to be aware of the situation and receives regular updates from the Ministry as the situation in China evolves.

York Region Public Health has also been working closely with our hospitals and community health care providers to keep them informed on the evolving situation. Physicians, hospitals and other health care facilities in York Region are aware to report a suspected or confirmed case of novel coronavirus, so we can take action to follow-up with close contacts to prevent and control further transmission.

Who can I contact if I require further information?

If you have additional questions, please contact Health Connection, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-361-5653 (1-866-512-6228 for the deaf or hard of hearing)