

# IH Newcastle – Coronavirus COVID-19 Policy

## Overview

On 31 December 2019, the *World Health Organisation* WHO was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The virus did not match any other known virus. This raised concern because when a virus is new, we do not know how it affects people.

One week later, on 7 January, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a new virus. The new virus is a [coronavirus](#), which is a family of viruses that include the common cold, and viruses such as [SARS](#) and [MERS](#). This new virus was temporarily named “2019-nCoV” and is now widely known as COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

WHO has been working with Chinese authorities and global experts from the day we were informed, to learn more about the virus, how it affects the people who are sick with it, how they can be treated, and what countries can do to respond.

Because this is a coronavirus, which usually causes respiratory illness, WHO has advice to people on [how to protect themselves and those around them](#) from getting the disease.<sup>2</sup>

WHO’s standard recommendations for the general public to reduce exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses are as follows, which include hand and respiratory hygiene, and safe food practices:

- *Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;*
- *When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands;*
- *Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;*
- *If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider;*
- *When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals;*
- *The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus> accessed 24/03/2020

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public> accessed 24/03/2020

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## What is novel coronavirus?

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Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause a range of illnesses, from the common cold to more severe infections like [MERS-CoV](#). SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) was a coronavirus.<sup>3</sup>

Some coronaviruses infect animals. Occasionally these viruses are transmitted from animals to humans.

In January 2020 China discovered a new coronavirus when it was investigating cases of pneumonia (from December 2019) in people in Wuhan city, Hubei province, China. This new virus is called 2019-nCoV, and is now known widely as COVID-19.

## How are people infected?

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It is not yet known how people are being infected by the virus.

The first cases all worked at a large seafood market that also sold live animals. It is thought that the virus may have been caught from an animal, although this is not confirmed. It is not known what this animal could be.

Some of the infections seem to have been caught from people who were already ill with the virus.

## The illness in people

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Symptoms of a coronavirus infection usually start up to 14 days after catching the infection.

Most people with the virus have had a fever, a cough and problems breathing. A few people have been severely ill.

## Treatment

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All of the cases have been looked after in hospital.

There is no specific treatment yet for the virus. Antibiotics will not work because it is a virus.

There is no vaccine against the virus.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/factsheet-health-professionals-coronaviruses> accessed 24/03/2020

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## Prevention

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If you are travelling to an area of risk, you should take these measures:

### *Prior to Departure*

- **Check travel advisories (restrictions)** - travel advisories will be highlighted on the specific [destination pages](#) of fit for travel under outbreak information and on the [foreign and commonwealth office](#) website.<sup>4</sup>
- **Be prepared** - Before you travel seek advice from your healthcare practitioner to ensure that any necessary vaccinations and antimalarial tablets (if required) can be arranged. Do this well in advance if possible (at least 4 weeks) as courses of vaccines may take time. There is no vaccine available at present to protect against a novel coronavirus. This is also a good opportunity to discuss other travel health issues.
- **Always ensure you have health insurance cover** - Travel insurance is essential and must cover medical evacuation and repatriation in the event that you become unwell and have to be transported home.
- **Consider taking a first aid kit** - this should include a small, basic first aid kit, including some means of checking body temperature, either a thermometer or strips to place on the forehead and alcohol-based rub for hand hygiene.

### *During Travel*

- **Hand washing.** Frequent and careful hand washing is one of the most important ways of preventing the spread of infection. If soap, clean water and towels are not available, alcohol hand rub can be used. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth unless your hands are clean.
- Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and their personal items.
- **Avoid contact with animals, poultry** (chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, quail) or wild birds, and the places where they are present, for example, bird/animal markets, commercial or backyard farms. Also avoid contact with sick or dead animals or birds.
- **Do not eat uncooked or undercooked poultry or meat.** All meat and poultry, including eggs must be thoroughly cooked.
- **If you become unwell with a fever, cough or difficulty with breathing, promptly seek out medical attention.** Your embassy can assist with contacting medical aid and relatives. Postpone any further travel until you are well again.
- **Do not attempt to bring live animals, poultry or poultry products back into the country.**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> accessed 24/03/2020

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## Update from Public Health England <sup>5</sup>

The main messages of the latest advice are:

- if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for **7 days** from when your symptoms started. (See [ending isolation](#) section for more information)
- if you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.
- it is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- for anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period. (See [ending isolation](#) section for more information)
- if you can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period
- if you cannot move vulnerable people out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible
- if you have coronavirus symptoms:
  - **DO NOT GO to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital**
  - **You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home**
  - **Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.**
- plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home and consider what can be done for vulnerable people in the household
- ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home
- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser
- if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the [NHS 111 online](#) coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> (accessed 24/03/2020)

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## Arriving to IH Newcastle

The advice for **all incoming travellers** (regardless of country of origin) is now the same.<sup>6</sup>

## What to do if you have symptoms

**Stay at home for 7 days** if you have either:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough

This will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious.

- Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.
- You do not need to contact NHS 111 to tell them you're staying at home.
- Use the [111 online coronavirus service](#) for advice in what to do

***Please follow this advice even if your symptoms are minor.***

### General reminders regarding booking changes:

If students opt to go home early, the school's **homestay accommodation bookings** can be adjusted with one full week's notice. **Newcastle 1** is an external accommodation provider, so the **fees paid cannot be refunded** – if you have student insurance, then that should be covered by your policy.

According to the school's **Terms and Conditions**, **school course fees cannot be refunded** once the course has already started. Some have student insurance that will cover this eventuality. There are other students who are booked on long-term courses, usually of 12 weeks or more, who have asked whether or not they can put their courses on hold and begin again when the virus situation improves. If you would like to do this, please let the school know via email [info@ihnewcastle.com](mailto:info@ihnewcastle.com) and the available options will be checked.

However, there is another available option to **continue taking classes online**. Details of these are available to all students.

The welfare of our students and staff always remains our top priority.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public> accessed 23/03/2020

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## Current Risk

**For *International House Newcastle's* staff and student population, the risk from COVID-19 is no higher than that for the rest of the UK.**

In accordance with the latest advice, the directors have decided that we lessons in school are suspended until further notice. Online lessons will continue and all students enrolled on courses will have access to the excellent course materials and provision for online classroom interaction with their teachers and classmates.

Students who have not already started these will receive instructions very soon, ready for beginning online on Monday, 30th March.

The staff here want to help students to reach their original study and life goals, despite worries about the virus. In response to this, the school has given extra training to teachers, to help them to deliver excellent classes online. The **IHOnline** option involves syllabus course work and scheduled full class interaction as well as weekly sessions of 1:1 tuition and tutorial time with the teaching staff.

Regular updates will be prepared and posted via IH Hub, our website and school's other social media channels. The school looks forward to a return to normal operations as soon as possible.

This policy information is published on the school's website, IH Hub and the school's other social media channels, and is available to all staff, including homestay providers and first-aiders, and will be subject to frequent reviews until official guidelines suggest that continuance is no longer necessary.