



What is COVID-19?

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.

One week later, on 7 January, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a new virus. The new virus was 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. ¹

WHO worked with Chinese authorities and global experts from the day they 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.²

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.*

¹ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus> accessed 11/08/2020

² <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public> accessed 11/08/2020





How are people infected?

While animals are believed to be the original source, the virus spread is now from person to person (human-to-human transmission). There is not enough epidemiological information at this time to determine how easily this virus spreads between people, but it is currently estimated that, on average, one infected person will infect between two and three other people.

The virus seems to be transmitted mainly via small respiratory droplets through sneezing, coughing, or when people interact with each other for some time in close proximity (usually less than one metre). These droplets can then be inhaled, or they can land on surfaces that others may come into contact with, who can then get infected when they touch their nose, mouth or eyes. The virus can survive on different surfaces from several hours (copper, cardboard) up to a few days (plastic and stainless steel). However, the amount of viable virus declines over time and may not always be present in sufficient numbers to cause infection.

The incubation period for COVID-19 (i.e. the time between exposure to the virus and onset of symptoms) is currently estimated to be between one and 14 days.

We know that the virus can be transmitted when people who are infected show symptoms such as coughing. There is also some evidence suggesting that transmission can occur from a person that is infected even two days before showing symptoms; however, uncertainties remain about the effect of transmission by asymptomatic persons.





The illness in people

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.

The infectious period may begin one to two days before symptoms appear, but people are likely most infectious during the symptomatic period, even if symptoms are mild and very non-specific. The infectious period is now estimated to last for 7-12 days in moderate cases and up to two weeks on average in severe cases. Preliminary data from the EU/EEA (from the countries with available data) show that around 20-30% of diagnosed COVID-19 cases are hospitalised and 4% have severe illness. Hospitalisation rates are higher for those aged 60 years and above, and for those with other underlying health conditions.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment or vaccine for this disease.

Healthcare providers are mostly using a symptomatic approach, meaning they treat the symptoms rather than target the virus, and provide supportive care (e.g. oxygen therapy, fluid management) for infected persons, which can be highly effective.

In severe and critically ill patients, a number of drugs are being tried to target the virus, but the use of these need to be more carefully assessed in randomised controlled trials. Several clinical trials are ongoing to assess their effectiveness but results are not yet available.

As this is a new virus, no vaccine is currently available. Although work on a vaccine has already started by several research groups and pharmaceutical companies worldwide, it may be many months or even more than a year before a vaccine has been tested and is ready for use in humans.





Advice for the public

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and others. Why? When someone coughs, sneezes, or speaks they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person has the disease.
- Avoid going to crowded places. Why? Where people come together in crowds, you are more likely to come into close contact with someone that has COVID-19 and it is more difficult to maintain physical distance of 1 metre (3 feet).
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and infect you.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and wash your hands. Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- Stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover. Have someone bring you supplies. If you need to leave your house, wear a mask to avoid infecting others. Why? Avoiding contact with others will protect them from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention, but call by telephone in advance if possible and follow the directions of your local health authority. Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- Keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources.





Prevention

- **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.³
- **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.
- **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.**

³ <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> accessed 11/08/2020



Public Health England – UK Government Guidance

The guidelines for Stay-at Home⁴ (self-isolation) situations are available from Public Health England in several languages other than English, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese and Polish.

The main messages of the latest advice are:

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 however mild, you **must self-isolate for at least 10 days** from when your symptoms started. You should **arrange to have a test** to see if you have COVID-19 – go to [testing](#) to arrange. **Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.**

If you are not experiencing symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19 you also must self-isolate for at least 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken. If you develop symptoms during this isolation period, you must restart your 10-day isolation from the day you develop symptoms.

After 10 days, if you still have a temperature you should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. You do not need to self-isolate after 10 days if you only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

If you live with others, all other 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 household became ill or if they do not have symptoms, from the day their test was taken. If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they must stay at home for at least 10 days from when their symptoms appear, regardless of what day they are on in their original 14-day isolation period. The ending isolation section below has more information.

If you have [symptoms](#), try and stay as far away from other members of your household as possible. It is especially important to stay away from anyone who is clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable with whom you share a household.

Reduce the spread of infection in your home by washing your hands regularly for 20 seconds using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser, and cover coughs and sneezes.

Consider alerting people who you do not live with and have had close contact within the last 48 hours to let them know you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> (accessed 11/08/2020)





Following a positive test result, you will receive a request by text, email or phone to log into the NHS Test and Trace service website and provide information about recent close contacts.

If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, then use the [NHS 111 online](#) COVID-19 service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

If you develop COVID-19 [symptoms](#) again at any point after ending your first period of isolation (self or household) then you must follow the guidance on self-isolation again.

Arriving for study at IH Newcastle

The current state of the [Covid-19 outbreak in the UK](#) is updated regularly on the UK government website.⁵

The latest advice regarding [travellers entering the UK](#) from various countries is also regularly updated on the UK government website.⁶

If you're a resident or visitor travelling to the UK from any country, you must [provide your journey and contact details](#) in accordance with UK Border (immigration) instructions. If you do not do this before you arrive it might take you longer to enter the UK.

If students need to self-isolate (quarantine)

If you need to self-isolate, please [inform the school](#), and you will be sent a message with a link to guidance and the arrangements for your online classes, if you are feeling well enough to attend these while you are away from school.

Safety in the school environment

Continued safety for all our students and staff is important to us, so much research, thought and planning has gone into the adjustments made throughout the school in response to the Covid-19 situation. Appropriate risk assessments have been drawn up, and students have access to clear information to help them to [study safely](#).⁷

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public> accessed 11/08/2020

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control> accessed 11/08/2020

⁷ <https://www.ihnewcastle.com/uploads/faqs-v1-aug-2020.pdf> accessed 11/08/2020





Current situation

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 government public health guidance, and after having suspended face to face classes for almost 6 months, the directors decided that the time and circumstances are now right for re-opening the school.

In the interim, the range of online lessons offered have become more varied and sophisticated, and our students benefited greatly from being able to continue productive study while all else had ground to a halt! The online options will therefore 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 whenever circumstances dictate.

The staff here want to help students to reach their original study and life goals, despite concerns about the virus. In response to this, the school continues to provide extra training to teachers, to help them to deliver excellent classes online. The [IHNOnline options](#) involve 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 school updates are prepared and posted via IH Hub, our website and school's other social media channels.





General reminders regarding booking changes

If students opt to curtail studies return home early, the school's **homestay accommodation bookings** can be adjusted with one full week's notice. **Newcastle 1** for student residences is an external accommodation provider, so the **fees paid for Newcastle 1 cannot be refunded**. If students have insurance, there could be cover for that eventuality included in the 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 may cover this eventuality.

We are offering a comprehensive range of online classes now, so any disruption to face to face study can be reduced by students **continuing to take their classes online**. Details of these are made available to all students.

For those students who are identified as needing to self-isolate, arrangements for the switch to online classes will be made immediately, so that they do not miss out on any study opportunities, provided they feel well enough to participate.

The welfare and safety of our students and staff always remains the school's top priority.

IH Newcastle Coronavirus Covid-19 Policy

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. This document will be subject to regular reviews until official guidelines suggest that continuance is no longer necessary.

