

## **2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

**Update: March 2, 2020**

### **Overview**

On December 31, 2019, a cluster of cases of pneumonia was reported in Wuhan, China, and the cause has been confirmed as a new coronavirus that has not previously been identified in humans. This virus is now known as COVID-19.

There are now confirmed cases of COVID-19 that have been identified in many different countries, including in Canada. The current situation is evolving. New information is becoming available daily and a clearer picture is being formed as this information is analyzed by provincial, national and international health agencies.

To date, most people (80%), who are infected with the 2019 Novel Coronavirus have a mild infection with fever and or cough while others have more severe disease with shortness of breath, pneumonia, and breathing difficulties which can lead to death. People with other serious health conditions are more likely to experience severe disease. Adults over age 20 appear to be at higher risk for infection than those under age 20.

### **What is the situation in Eastern Ontario?**

**At the moment, the risk of contracting COVID-19 is considered low in Eastern Ontario.** The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and the Eastern Ontario Health Unit continue to work with our partners at the regional, provincial and federal levels to monitor the situation, and are prepared to respond to any potential cases in our area should they occur.

### **What are coronaviruses and how are they transmitted?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). Like many respiratory viruses, COVID-19 is spread from person to person through contact with droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person. This is why it is important to always cover a cough or sneeze. Droplets can remain on a surface for a short period of time so it is important to avoid touching the mouth and nose, and to frequently wash hands. The extent and severity of illness caused by COVID-19 is still not fully known. More information is expected to emerge in the coming days and weeks.

Every weekday at about 10:30 a.m. ET, the Province of Ontario's Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) webpage will be updated with the most up-to-date information including the status of cases in Ontario:

[www.Ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.Ontario.ca/coronavirus)

Individuals at risk for being infected with COVID-19 are those who have travelled to an area affected by COVID-19 (see [PHAC Travel Advisories](#)), or who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

### **How can I protect my family?**

We recommend that your family use the same precautions as you regularly use to prevent the spread of other respiratory infections (such as cold and flu):

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you have just washed your hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your arm, not your hand.
- Stay home if you are sick, and keep your children home if they are sick.
- Keep commonly used surfaces clean.

### **What can schools do to respond to COVID-19?**

The Public Health Agency of Canada has prepared a detailed guideline for child care settings and schools to decrease the risk of COVID-19 in the school setting, and recommendations about how to respond if a case did occur in a student or employee.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

### **What should be considered by families considering travel outside Canada?**

The Public Health Agency of Canada has detailed advice for Canadians who are considering travel outside of Canada.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>

- Check Active Travel Health Notices about the destination country (see link above). To ensure you are aware of the latest developments on this evolving situation, we recommend monitoring the news and read all [travel advice and advisories](#) for your destination.
- Know the health risks of exposure to COVID-19, the symptoms of COVID 19, and how to access health care in the destination country.
- Use precautions when travelling (see above, “How I can protect my family?”).
- Travelers should expect increased health screening measures at points of entry for international destinations, including airports. Local authorities may impose control measures suddenly, including movement restrictions such as quarantines.
- Before travelling, verify with the [foreign diplomatic mission](#) of your destination to see if its authorities have implemented any specific restrictions related to this situation. These include entry requirements, border closures and flight suspensions.
- While in an affected destination, we recommend following the instructions of local authorities, and signing up to the PHAC [Registration of Canadians Abroad](#) service to receive important updates.

- For people planning cruise ship travel, infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, can spread quickly due to close contact between passengers. You can contact the cruise line to check if their travel plans will be impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak or visit the [Cruise Lines International Association](#) for information regarding how they are responding to the situation.
- Once in the destination country, planning to leave and arrival in Canada:
  - If you develop symptoms of coronavirus before you are scheduled to leave the destination country, do **not** get on board any form of public transportation. Seek medical attention.
  - If you experience symptoms of COVID-19 during a flight, tell the flight attendant before you land or the border services officer as you enter the country. They will notify a quarantine officer who will assess your symptoms.
  - If you do not have symptoms but believe you were exposed to a source of COVID-19, report this information to a Canada border services agent on arrival in Canada. This is required under the *Quarantine Act*. The Canada border services agent will provide instructions for you to follow. You may be required to self-isolate at home and/or monitor symptoms.

### **What measures should be taken by returning travellers from places experiencing COVID-19 infections?**

Anyone returning from affected countries (see [PHAC website for list of countries](#)) should watch for the appearance of symptoms in the 14 days following their return.

Travellers who become ill during or soon after their travels to an affected country should seek medical care. Where possible, they should be screened over the phone before scheduling an appointment, by calling their healthcare provider, their local health unit, or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. Travellers who are going directly to a hospital should call ahead to let the office know you are coming, put on a mask and immediately report to triage at the hospital ER. They should tell their healthcare provider about their travel history and whether they have been in any high-risk circumstances during their travel, such as direct contact with animals or their droppings (e.g. when visiting a live animal market or farm), or close contact with a sick person.

### **How are people being treated for COVID-19 infections?**

For now, there is no specific treatment for most people with coronavirus infection. Symptom management is the primary focus of treating individuals with this illness. Individuals usually recover with the supportive care that is regularly offered to manage pneumonia.

### **Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Etiquette & Infection Prevention and Control Resources**

For more information, including hand hygiene and infection prevention and control resources, visit the Health Unit website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).