

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Factsheet for schools and early learning centres

Last updated 13 February 2020

An outbreak of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in Wuhan, China in late December 2019. Cases have been reported predominantly in mainland China, as well as some other countries, including confirmed cases in Victoria, Australia.

What is this virus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The virus seen in mainland China is called 'novel' because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people infected live in, or travelled to, mainland China. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath. Symptoms can take up to 14 days to develop.

What if I have a student or staff member who has been to mainland China in the past 14 days?

The following staff, students and children should self-isolate and are advised to stay at home and avoid public settings, including attendance at schools and early childhood education services:

- People who were in Hubei Province until 14 days after they were last in Hubei Province;
- People who were in mainland China on or after 1 February 2020 until 14 days after they were last in mainland China;
- Close contacts of confirmed cases until 14 days after last close contact with the confirmed case.

Children and staff who are well and have travelled to any other countries where there have been reported cases, are NOT recommended to be excluded from schools and early childhood education services unless the following applies:

- The person is a confirmed case of COVID-19
- The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days

If you think a child, student or staff member may meet one of the above criteria please call the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to discuss further actions on 1300 651 160.

How can we help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence.

Encourage all children, students and staff to:

- wash hands often with soap and water
- cough and sneeze into your elbow

Where can I get more information?

For Victorian updates to the current incident, go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>

For Department of Education and Training updates:

<https://education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

For national updates: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus>

For international updates: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>

WHO resources <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

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