

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) – FAQ

January 30, 2020

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses 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 in Ontario and throughout Canada.

What is novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

The type of coronavirus originally linked to Wuhan, China is a new (novel) strain that experts are learning more about every day.

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.

Authorities are currently 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.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675
TTY 1-866-512-6228
york.ca/health



Are there any Canadian cases of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

As of January 28, 2020, there is one presumptive and one confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Toronto and one presumptive case in Vancouver, British Columbia. All of these individuals had recently returned from Wuhan, China.

A presumptive case means that a person has tested positive in the provincial lab but requires additional confirmatory testing at the national lab.

York Region Public Health continues to actively monitor the situation in collaboration with provincial and national health agencies.

Why is the risk of acquiring the virus in the community low for York Region residents?

At this time there is no evidence of community spread in Canada. This means that all confirmed cases here in Canada have travelled to Wuhan. Any person who is suspected or tested for the virus is immediately isolated and their close contacts are very closely followed and isolated if they develop any symptoms. At this time, what we know about the virus indicates that even if you were in a public place with someone who has novel coronavirus, you're not at risk of getting it unless you were in very close contact with them (i.e. you live with them or have provided direct physical care like bathing or feeding them or providing health care without proper precautions).

Are the outbreaks of Coronavirus I'm hearing about in Long Term Care or Retirement homes the same as the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

The novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not reported before. Other types of coronaviruses and respiratory infections are very common in Canada at this time of year. Reports of coronavirus on our weekly reports on our website, or that you may hear about at a retirement home or long term care home are not related to 2019-nCoV.

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

All York Region residents 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
- Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency of high-touch surfaces such as toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs, countertops, light switches and other shared items using regular household cleaners

- Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with saliva such as toothbrushes, eating utensils drinks/water bottles and towels.

If you have symptoms of acute respiratory infection and have recently traveled to Hubei province in China or have been in close contact with someone who is sick and recently traveled to Hubei province, contact your health care provider. Try to phone your health care provider in advance of visiting and let them know your travel history, your exact travel dates and location(s), and any contact with an ill person from Hubei province.

If you do not have symptoms and traveled to the affected area, remember that symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear. Monitor for signs and symptoms and if you do develop any symptoms please contact your health care provider (and phone them in advance of visiting).

Testing is not available for individuals who are well.

Please note York Region Public Health offices are not testing for novel coronavirus.

Are there any travel advisories?

For updated information on the latest travel advisories visit <https://travel.qc.ca/travelling/advisories/pneumonia-china>

What do I do if I am feeling ill and travelled to Wuhan or I am feeling ill and had contact with someone feeling ill who travelled to Wuhan in the past 14 days prior to illness?

Please seek medical attention for assessment and possible testing, and try to call them in advance to let them know of your symptoms and any travel to Wuhan or contact with someone who is ill and travelled to Wuhan, China

Please note York Region Public Health offices are not testing for novel coronavirus.

What is York Region Public Health doing?

York Region Public Health is closely monitoring the outbreak of viral pneumonia. We are working closely with the Ontario Ministry of Health and receive regular updates from the Ministry as the situation in China evolves.

York Region Public Health is 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 to report a suspected or confirmed case of novel coronavirus to Public Health to take action to follow-up with close contacts to prevent and control further transmission.

I am a health care provider with a question about a patient related to 2019-nCoV, who should I contact?

Any practice-related questions and reports from health care professionals should be directed to York Region Public Health's Control of Infectious Diseases team. If you are a health care professional and have a suspect case of 2019-nCoV, call York Region Public Health immediately at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588** (Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or **905-953-6478** after hours (before 8:30 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday and 24 hours per day on weekends/holidays).

For general inquiries and questions from the public, visit york.ca/coronavirus. For additional questions, contact Access York at 1-877-464-9675.

Are there any quarantine recommendations based on travel to China, or contact with people traveling from China?

Quarantine or self-isolation for people that are **well** is not necessary and not recommended at this time. There is no evidence of community transmission of novel coronavirus within Canada and in Canada, it has only been acquired as a result of travel to affected areas in China.

Travellers returning from China that are feeling unwell are screened at Canadian airports and followed up with by public health and health care when necessary.

The recommendations from experts at the Ministry of Health and Public Health Agency of Canada is that people that are well, regardless of where they may have traveled, do not need to be quarantined and should continue on with regular activities (e.g. attending work, school, other public places).

As is our usual advice, especially during cold and flu season, if you are feeling unwell you should stay home from work, school and other public places and of course, seek health care as you normally would (and try to call in advance where possible, being clear about your exact travel history).

Should my school or workplace take special precautions?

There is no need for schools, workplaces or other organizations to take special measures related to 2019-nCov, beyond what they usually do to protect against cold and flu season (for example, frequent handwashing, regular environmental cleaning)

Anyone with symptoms of acute respiratory infection and recent travel to Wuhan, China or contact with someone who has recently traveled to Wuhan, China should contact your health care provider.

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 general public against novel coronavirus.

I do not work in health care, do I need to wear a mask in public, at school, or at work?

Your workplace (and specifically health and wellness or occupational health and safety department) may have specific requirements or policies around mask. However, for school, work, or other public places (outside of health care) there is no need to wear a mask to protect against novel coronavirus if you are feeling well. Dr. Theresa Tam, the chief public health officer of Canada, actually cautions about the risks of wearing a mask. She advises that wearing masks when you're well is not an effective

measure. Sometimes it can actually present some risks, as you're putting your fingers up and down on your face, removing your mask and putting them next to your eyes.

Measures you can take that help against the spread of infections are the same as preventing against cold and flu, including:

- 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
- Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with saliva such as toothbrushes, eating utensils drinks/water bottles and towels

Will York Region Public Health be providing hand sanitizers or masks to health care providers in York Region?

Health care providers are responsible for these supplies, Public Health will not be providing hand sanitizer or masks. Washing hands frequently and thoroughly using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is an important part of protecting against the spread of emerging diseases, the common cold, flu and other diseases commonly circulating at this time of year.

Information for returning travellers and organizations with returning travelers

There are no restrictions for individuals who are **well**. Quarantine or self-isolation for people that are well is not necessary and not recommended at this time, regardless of travel history to China or elsewhere.

The recommendation from experts at the Ministry of Health and Public Health Agency of Canada is that people who are well, regardless of where they may have traveled, should continue on with regular activities (e.g., attending work, school, other public places).

There is no evidence of community transmission of novel coronavirus within Canada. In Canada, the disease has only been acquired as a result of travel to affected areas in China. Travellers returning from China are screened at Canadian airports. Individuals that are feeling unwell are directed to medical care and followed up with by public health and health care when necessary.

As is our usual advice, especially during cold and flu season, if you are feeling unwell you should stay home from work, school and other public places and of course, seek health care as you normally would (and try to call in advance where possible, being clear about your exact travel history).

Information related to China Southern Airlines Flight CZ311

China Southern Airlines Flight CZ311 landed in Toronto from Guangzhou, China, on January 22, 2020, as per the recent [statement](#) issued [by Toronto Public Health](#), two passengers aboard this flight have been confirmed as cases of 2019-nCoV.

If you were on flight #CZ311 and were in an at-risk zone near the index case, Public Health will be contacting you or will already have contacted you.

If you were on flight #CZ311 from Guangzhou, China to Toronto but not in an at-risk zone, watch for possible signs and symptoms of novel coronavirus (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) for 14 days after landing. If you develop any signs or symptoms, please contact Health Connection, Monday to Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and let them know your travel history and that you are experiencing symptoms.

Don't delay seeking medical attention for assessment and call your health care provider in advance to let them know of your symptoms and that you were aboard this flight.

Who can I contact if I require further information?

If you have additional questions, please contact Health Connection Monday to Sunday daily from 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).

For medical advice, you may also contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential service you can call to get health advice or information. A Registered Nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For questions about workplace safety, please contact your own Occupational Health and Safety Department or the Ministry of Labour Health & Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008.

Where can I find out more about the novel coronavirus?

Please visit york.ca/coronavirus for the latest information from York Region Public Health or visit Ontario.ca/coronavirus.