

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

A briefing note for stakeholders Feb 2020

Background

A detailed overview of the background to the virus including, epidemiology, virology, transmission, and clinical features is available [here](#).

Like the common cold, coronavirus infection usually occurs through close contact with a person with novel coronavirus via cough and sneezes or hand contact. A person can also be infected by touching contaminated surfaces if they do not wash their hands.

Latest information for the UK

DHSC publish daily figures on testing at 2pm every day [here](#). The latest information for patients is available on [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).

The NHS and Public Health England (PHE) are extremely well prepared for outbreaks of new infectious diseases. The NHS has put in place measures to ensure the safety of all patients and NHS staff while also ensuring services are available to the public as normal.

The risk to the general public is moderate. If you have arrived back to the UK from mainland China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia or Macau within 14 days, follow the specific advice for returning travellers.

Anyone who has travelled to China or places listed above in the last 14 days and develops symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, should immediately:

- Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- Call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country

What happens with cases?

Anyone that is concerned about having the coronavirus is being advised to call NHS111 rather than presenting at a healthcare setting.

NHS111 have three potential pathways:

- For general information there is a pre-recorded message
- For more detailed information callers can be referred to a PHE helpline
- Callers are being assessed against the [case definition](#), if there are any concerns that they may have coronavirus they are transferred to a clinician.

Should an individual require testing they are being referred to an appropriate receiving unit in a healthcare setting. At this point, arrangements are made with the receiving unit so they can arrange for the patient to be tested in isolation.

Anyone who needs to be tested should not use public transport or taxis.

Information on investigation and initial clinical management of possible cases is available [here](#).

Testing of suspected coronavirus cases is carried out in line with strict procedures and protocol. This means that suspected cases are kept in isolation, away from public areas of the hospital and returned home also in isolation. Any equipment that comes into contact with suspected cases is thoroughly cleaned as appropriate in line with [infection prevention control guidance](#). Additional guidance for healthcare providers with staff who have travelled to China and other specified areas/countries is available [here](#). Patients and staff can be reassured that their safety is the top priority, and patients are encouraged to attend all appointments as usual.

Trusts have been provided with information explaining the actions to take should an individual who suspects they may have coronavirus present. Trusts have been asked to set up a Coronavirus Priority Assessment Service. This is applicable to Emergency Department (EDs), Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs), Minor Injury Units (MIUs), Walk-In-Centres (WIC) and Urgent Care Centres (UCCs)

This will involve a dedicated isolation area to be available 24/7 (or during the opening hours of the receiving unit) which will be referred to as the "NHS 111 Coronavirus Pod". Trusts may also decide to use this pod area for diagnostic sampling, while others may have a separate diagnostic sampling facility. Details of the service are set out in a Standard Operating Procedure which has been sent to trusts.

We understand that some individuals present at healthcare settings. PHE has issued [guidance for primary care](#) advising on what to do should a patient present. Additional guidance for primary care is being prepared and will be issued shortly.

Once tested, patients are advised to self-isolate. Guidance on self-isolation is available [here](#). Should a test result come back as positive, the individual is transferred to an appropriate NHS facility for treatment.

PHE will carry out a thorough risk assessment to trace this individual's movements in the last fortnight. PHE will prioritise contacting people who might have had close and sustained

contact with the individual to provide them with health advice about symptoms and emergency contact details in case they become unwell.

If members of the public in a locality that has a confirmed case have not been contacted, then they do not need to take any action. **Everyone is being reminded to follow Public Health England advice to:**

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using public transport. Use a sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.**
- **Always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.**