



January 23, 2020

## **Health Alert: Outbreak of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, China**

### **Summary**

Amarillo Public Health continues to monitor an outbreak of a 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China that began in December 2019. As of Wednesday, January 22, 2020, no cases have been reported in the Amarillo area. According to the World Health Organization, as of January 20, 2020, there have been 282 confirmed cases from 4 countries, including China, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Those from countries other than China were all travelers from Wuhan City. As the situation progresses, the case count will also change.

The first reported case of 2019-nCoV in the United States was reported from Washington state, on Tuesday, January 21, 2020. The patient arrived in the United States from Wuhan City on January 15, 2020.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people; numerous other coronaviruses circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people such as has been seen with Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/index.html>) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV) (<https://www.cdc.gov/sars/index.html>).

### **Current Actions**

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is staying in contact with the CDC and providing updates to local health departments as information unfolds. Amarillo Public Health is also closely monitoring the situation and will provide updates on testing or preventive measures as major changes occur.

International airports LAX (Los Angeles), SFO (San Francisco) and JFK (New York City) are involved in screening international passengers from Wuhan, China for symptoms such as fever. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, two more airports (Atlanta and Chicago) will be adding screening processes. There is no report of additional airports being added at this time. If asymptomatic, passengers are being given cards with information on what symptoms to watch for and advising them to seek medical attention if symptoms develop.

### **Recommendations for Healthcare Providers**

Limited information is available on all clinical illness associated with 2019-nCoV, but symptoms of illness mainly include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. No vaccine or specific treatment for 2019-nCoV infection is available; care is supportive.

Patients should be encouraged to:



January 23, 2020

- **Avoid all nonessential travel to Wuhan, China**
- **Wash hands properly and often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water**
- **Use an alcohol-based hand rub or sanitizer if soap and water are not available**
- **Avoid contact with those who are sick**
- **If sick, stay home from work, school or daycare and avoid traveling**

Healthcare providers should obtain a detailed travel history while evaluating patients with fever, acute respiratory illness and travel to (or contact with someone who has traveled to) Wuhan, China.

### **Criteria to Guide Evaluation of Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV**

Patients in the United States who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a PUI in association with the outbreak of 2019-nCoV in Wuhan City, China.

1) Fever<sup>1</sup> AND symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) –and in the last 14 days before symptom onset,

- History of travel from Wuhan City, China  
-OR-
- Close contact<sup>2</sup> with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV while that person was ill.

2) Fever<sup>1</sup> OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) –and in the last 14 days before symptom onset,

- Close contact<sup>2</sup> with an ill laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient.

Although routes of transmission have yet to be definitively determined, CDC recommends a cautious approach to interacting with patients under investigation. Ask such patients to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified. Conduct their evaluation in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room, if available. Personnel entering the room should use standard precautions, contact precautions, and airborne precautions and use eye protection (goggles or a face shield).

### **Recommendations for Reporting, Testing, and Specimen Collection**

Respiratory panels available in hospital or commercial labs do not currently have the capability to detect 2019-nCoV. A negative or a positive coronavirus result in similar panels does not indicate 2019-nCoV illness or lack of illness. A negative rapid flu test alone does not increase



January 23, 2020

likelihood of 2019-nCoV illness. Testing for 2019-nCoV is not commercially available at this time.

Healthcare providers should **immediately** notify both infection control personnel at their healthcare facility and Amarillo Public Health in the event of a PUI for 2019-nCoV. If testing is recommended, Amarillo Public Health will coordinate specimen collection and testing along with the Texas Department of State Health Services and the CDC. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of time of symptom onset. CDC recommends collecting and testing multiple clinical specimens from different sites, including all three specimen types—lower respiratory, upper respiratory, and serum specimens.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Fever may not be present in some patients.

<sup>2</sup>Close contact with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV is defined as—

a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters), or within the room or care area, of a novel coronavirus case for a prolonged period of time while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE; can include caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a novel coronavirus case.

– or –

b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a novel coronavirus case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Considerations when assessing close contact include the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk) and the clinical symptoms of the person with novel coronavirus (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient). Special consideration should be given to those exposed in healthcare settings.

#### **For More Information**

More information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

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