



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
SINGAPORE

MH 34:24/5

21 Jan 2020

All registered medical practitioners

**MOH CIRCULAR 12/2020**

**SITUATION UPDATE: 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS IN CHINA**

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is closely monitoring the situation in China. A novel coronavirus, the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), has been determined to be the etiological agent of the pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan city. As of 20 January, 198 laboratory-confirmed cases including four deaths have been reported from Wuhan city. In addition, 25 laboratory-confirmed cases have been reported outside of Wuhan city, in Guangdong (14), Beijing (5), Shanghai (2), Thailand (2), Japan (1) and South Korea (1). There had been a cluster involving 15 healthcare workers in Wuhan, which indicates the presence of human-to-human transmission.

**NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECT CASES**

2. In view of the above developments, the **suspect case criteria** have been **expanded** to the following:

- a) A person with clinical signs and symptoms suggestive of pneumonia or severe respiratory infection with breathlessness **AND** travel to mainland China within the last 14 days; or
- b) A person with an acute respiratory illness of any degree of severity who, within 14 days before onset of illness, had been to a hospital in mainland China or had close contact<sup>1</sup> with a case of 2019 novel coronavirus infection.

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<sup>1</sup> Close contact is defined as:

- Anyone who provided care for the patient, including a health care worker or family member, or who had other similarly close physical contact;
- Anyone who stayed (e.g. lived with, visited) at the same place as a case.



3. Please note that **transit** in an airport located in mainland China is **not** considered as having travelled to mainland China.

4. **Suspect cases whose conditions are medically stable** should be sent to the following hospitals via the dedicated ambulance service at 6220-5298:

- **Persons aged 16 years and above** (including pregnant women) to TTSH Emergency Department.
- **Children below the age of 16 years** to KKH Children's Emergency Department.

5. Please call the SCDF (995) ambulance if the patient is **medically unstable** (i.e. hypotensive).

6. Please inform the ambulance operator that you are referring a **suspect case of 2019-nCoV**.

7. Patients with mild respiratory symptoms who do not meet the criteria for referral in paragraph 2 should be clinically managed as per usual practice. Physicians should advise family members and other close contacts of suspect cases to be vigilant for symptoms of fever or respiratory symptoms, and to seek medical attention as soon as possible if unwell.

8. **All suspect cases of 2019-nCoV are to be isolated, and reported to MOH immediately.** Please call the Surveillance Duty Officer of the Communicable Diseases Division at 9817 1463, followed by submission of the MD131 Notification of Infectious Diseases Form through the Communicable Diseases Live & Enhanced Surveillance (CDLENS) system at <http://www.cdLens.moh.gov.sg> or fax the MD131 form to MOH at 6221 5528 / 6221 5538 / 6221 5567.

## **INFECTION CONTROL**

9. Medical clinics are reminded to routinely screen patients for fever and travel history. Patients with fever or respiratory symptoms should be asked to don a surgical mask. Febrile patients should be placed in a separate area from non-febrile patients, where possible.

10. Medical practitioners are also advised to practice standard precautions including donning surgical masks and practicing good hand hygiene during routine clinical care. Environmental cleaning should be carried out regularly.

11. For clarification on this circular, please email [MOH\\_INFO@moh.gov.sg](mailto:MOH_INFO@moh.gov.sg).



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**IMPORTANT**

***This circular supersedes MOH CIRCULAR 04/2020 titled, "VIRAL PNEUMONIA OF UNKNOWN CAUSE IN WUHAN CITY, CHINA" dated 02 January 2020.***

## **ANNEX A**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS**

#### **1. What is the cause of the pneumonia cluster in Wuhan city?**

To date, the source of infection, and mode of transmission remain uncertain. However, the etiological agent has been determined to be a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The source of infection and mode of transmission remains unknown although there has been human-to-human transmission, including a cluster involving healthcare workers.

#### **2. What are the signs and symptoms of 2019-nCoV infection?**

People infected with 2019-nCoV were reported to typically experience fever, cough and pneumonia.

#### **4. Is there any vaccine or treatment for 2019-nCoV infection?**

No vaccine or specific treatment for 2019-nCoV infection is currently available. Treatment is supportive and based on the patient's clinical condition.

#### **6. What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should I wear when treating patients who may be suspect cases of 2019-nCoV?**

Standard infection control and droplet precautions are recommended when attending to a suspect 2019-nCoV patient (i.e. don an N95 mask when performing the medical examination, and give the patient a surgical mask to wear if he or she has respiratory symptoms).

#### **7. What advice can I give to patients who are travelling to countries where cases of 2019-nCoV are being reported?**

You should advise patients to:

- Avoid contact with live animals including poultry and birds, and consumption of raw and undercooked meats;
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of illness;
- Observe good personal hygiene;
- Practise frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing);
- Wear a mask if experiencing respiratory symptoms such as a cough or runny nose;
- Cover his/her mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin immediately; and

- Seek medical attention promptly if feeling unwell.

**8. What should I do if a patient who fits the suspect case definition for 2019-nCoV refuses to be referred to the designated hospitals for further evaluation?**

Advise the patient/guardian that it is in their own, as well as their families' interest to undergo further evaluation at TTSH/KKH. If the patient continues to refuse referral, please call the Surveillance Duty Officer of the Communicable Diseases Division at 9817 1463 (available 24 hours) for assistance and advice. A legal order to compel the patient to be evaluated in a hospital may be served, if necessary

**9. Should healthcare staff returning from China be quarantined?**

Staff returning from China do not have to be routinely quarantined. However, they should be monitored closely for any fever or respiratory symptoms for at least 14 days after returning from China. Any staff who fall ill should be promptly referred for evaluation.