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All-staff bulletin

Information for staff on novel coronavirus

Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, Clinical Policy, Planning & Partnerships

You may have heard about a cluster of respiratory infections that appeared in Wuhan, China during the month of December. The illnesses have been attributed to a [novel coronavirus](#).

Illnesses associated with the new virus, named 2019-nCoV, are similar to several respiratory illnesses and include fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache.

At this point in time, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) continues to discuss whether or not to declare a public health emergency of international concern. However, the number of cases linked to this outbreak is changing quickly, with increasing news coverage raising public awareness in B.C.

The risk to Canadians is currently considered low. And while no cases have been confirmed in B.C., the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#) and provincial and federal authorities are monitoring the situation closely.

For your awareness, below you will find a summary of our coordinated preparedness and response as well as additional resources to help inform you and your daily interactions with patients, visitors, partners and other stakeholders.

Early case identification and containment

We ask that all care providers assist in early case identification and containment by observing the following:

For all patients with acute respiratory illness/pneumonia:

- Be diligent about hand hygiene;
- Ask patients presenting with acute respiratory illness/pneumonia about their travel history; and
- Place patients with acute respiratory illness/pneumonia in single-occupancy as soon as possible and use **droplet** and **contact** precautions (including eye protection) for all care activities.

For those patients with travel history to Wuhan, China:

- Promptly notify your site’s infection control team and ensure they are informing a medical health officer (if your site does not have a local infection control team, directly notify the local medical health officer for your region) if the patient presents with:
 - Fever and acute respiratory illness, with or without pneumonia;
AND
 - Travel specifically to Wuhan, China within 14 days prior to symptom onset;
OR
 - Another potentially relevant exposure (e.g., close contact with someone who was ill and had recently travelled to Wuhan).

Additionally, N95 masks are required only when performing an aerosol-generating procedure on the patients described above. Aerosol-generating procedures include:

- Intubation and related procedures
- CPR
- Bronchoscopy
- Sputum Induction
- Nebulized therapy or high concentration oxygen therapy
- Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP)
- Open airway suctioning
- Nasopharyngeal swabs, aspirates and scoping

Staying informed

Check the [BCCDC bulletins on emerging respiratory viruses](#) for the most current information and instructions on infection control measures for patients who present with symptoms.

BCCDC is providing regular updates and information on the situation and detection and containment measures to health care providers including medical health officers, infectious disease specialists, medical microbiologists, emergency department physicians, public health nurses, infection control practitioners, airport authorities and others.

Patients are not being asked to go to one specific health care facility. All hospitals are being kept informed so they are able to respond appropriately.

Speaking with patients, visitors and others about the outbreak

If asked about the outbreak, please remind those inquiring that this is a developing situation. Here are some additional speaking points that may help guide your conversations:

- Currently, the overall risk of disease spread to Canada is considered low.
- We have multiple systems in place to identify, prevent and control the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.
- Based on emerging information, reports suggest that there has been limited person-to-person spread of the virus.

- If you have been travelling and you become ill, or become ill after you return home, tell your health care provider about recent travel and your symptoms or call 8-1-1.
- Always perform diligent hand hygiene. If you are seeking care for respiratory concerns, we encourage you to wear a mask when entering health care facilities.
- You should also tell your provider if you had close contact with a sick person or had another high-risk exposure, such as direct contact with animals, while travelling.
- No matter where Canadians plan to travel, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that they consult travel.gc.ca, which is the Government of Canada's official source of destination-specific travel information. It provides important advice to help travellers make informed decisions and travel safely while abroad.
- For more provincial information about the novel coronavirus, including symptoms and diagnosis, please visit the BCCDC's website.

Our role in staying vigilant

The BCCDC and provincial and federal authorities are closely monitoring the outbreak of respiratory illness linked to the novel coronavirus.

We've developed a [diagnostic test for the new coronavirus](#). PHSA team members who suspect a case are asked to report it to their local infection prevention and control team and ensure the local medical health officer is notified.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is implementing measures to detect cases that may be entering through our airports. Overall, public health teams are responding by closely monitoring the situation, developing a system for early detection of infections so we can prevent spread, and keeping our partners in health care delivery, public health and the airport authorities apprised of the situation.

As more information becomes available, we will continue to share updates with you through PHSA's communications channels. Staff and clinicians working in acute care and patient-facing settings may also receive more site-specific information.

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