

HEALTH ADVISORY



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Update on Coronavirus Outbreak in China”

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) would like to update the public regarding the ongoing outbreak of pneumonia that started in Wuhan, China.

What caused the outbreak?

The ongoing pneumonia outbreak is caused by a new type of coronavirus referred to as 2019-nCoV.

What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms include fever, and symptoms associated with lower respiratory illness such as coughing, and difficulty breathing.

How is the virus transmitted?

While originally thought to be spreading from animal to person, there are now indications that 2019-nCoV may be spread from person to person via coughing and sneezing - similarly to how the flu is spread. *If you traveled to Wuhan and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. You should also avoid contact with others and not travel while sick.*

How can the spread of this illness be prevented?

The spread of this type of illness can be combated with good hygiene practices:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid contact with sick people, and stay home or seek medical attention if you are not feeling well

Protect yourself and others from getting sick Wash your hands



- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste



Travelers to Wuhan should also avoid contact with live animals and thoroughly cook meat and eggs.

Where have cases of the virus been found?

As of this release, according to the CDC, almost 300 cases have been identified in China, with several deaths reported. Exported cases have also been identified in Japan, Thailand, and South Korea.

According to a media release from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 (Wednesday, January 22 in the CNMI), the first travel-related case of 2019-nCoV has been identified in the mainland United States. The patient had recently returned to Washington state from Wuhan, and is currently being treated for the illness.

What precautionary measures are being taken by the CHCC?

The CHCC Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP) is continuing to work with customs and border control officials at the Saipan Airport and ports of entry to screen passengers arriving from affected areas.

The airport screening takes place in two stages. First, a customs official is provided a flight manifest for incoming flights, which identifies passengers and the places they had recently traveled to or from. Customs then informs PHEP of incoming arrivals from affected areas, such as Wuhan. PHEP surveillance staff go to the airport to question these passengers about recent travel and any symptoms they may be experiencing. This information is used to determine whether the individual should seek further care. If a potential case is identified, PHEP staff will notify the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFEMS) for transport of the patient to the CHCC. The CHCC can then initiate protocols for a potential infectious disease case, ensuring that the patient can be treated and isolated in such a way that protects them, the staff, and other patients at the hospital.

The risk from these outbreaks depends on characteristics of the virus, including whether and how well it spreads between people, the severity of resulting illness, and the medical or other measures available to control the impact of the virus (for example, vaccine or treatment medications). There is much more to learn about how the 2019-nCoV virus spreads, severity of associated illness, and other features of the virus. Investigations are ongoing, and further updates on the situation and how it pertains to the CNMI will be released from the CHCC as they become available. Although outbreaks of new virus infections among people are always of public health concern, according to the CDC release, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV to the general American public is considered low at this time.

You can also learn more about the developing situation from the CDC or WHO:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

For more information, please contact the PHEP surveillance unit at (670)234-8950.

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/PressRelease.html>

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