

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

January 2020

Background

In December of 2019 a cluster of cases of suspected pneumonia were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) in the city of Wuhan in the Chinese province of Hubei. The pneumonia was caused by a previously unidentified in humans coronavirus. Wuhan, a city of approximately 11 million residents, continued to see increases in the number of confirmed cases. While the majority of cases have developed in Wuhan, additional cases have been reported throughout Asia, Europe, the United States and now Canada (a handful of cases to date).

This coronavirus causes respiratory illness, fever, dry cough and headache. Most cases have been considered mild to moderate with few developing into more severe illness that includes shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. Symptoms typically appear anywhere between two and 14 days after exposure and the virus is reportedly spread through close person to person contact (most likely droplet), although the method of transmission continues to be studied. The basic reproduction rate of this coronavirus or (R-0) is estimated at 3.8 which means that 72-75% of transmissions must be prevented in order to keep the rate of infection from increasing. For comparison, influenza has an R-0 of between 2-3, Ebola an R-0 of 1.5-2.5 and pertussis an R-0 of 5.5.

Reporting on numbers is futile as they continue to change, sometimes within the hour. WHO and other news sources will report these stats daily and we encourage everyone to stay current. It is important to note that to date (January 28, 2020), deaths have occurred only in China. Chinese health authorities have taken serious measures to help prevent further spread, effectively shutting down Wuhan and neighbouring cities in Hubei province. Rail, air, bus and inter and intracity transport has been cut off.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, public health teams have implemented early screening at airports and quarantine officers are available at Vancouver International to coordinate any response required. Richmond Hospital Infection Control Practitioners are similarly ready to respond as needed. The BCCDC has developed a diagnostic test for the new coronavirus which will allow for quick and accurate detection of potential cases. Infection control practitioners, emergency department staff and primary care providers have all been notified to screen for and be aware of coronavirus symptoms and are asked to report these suspected cases to their local medical health officers immediately.

As noted, only two cases have been confirmed in Canada in individuals who travelled to Toronto from Wuhan in late January. The first presumptive case, also of an individual returning from China, was reported in British Columbia on January 28, 2020 in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. The noted risk remains low.

- NNPBC is closely monitoring the rapidly changing situation around the coronavirus and is in close contact with health authorities, BC Government and BC's Chief Nursing Officers.
- At the time of writing, there are only a handful of confirmed cases of coronavirus in Canada.
- The risk to the public remains low at this time.
- Nurses, many of whom work as primary care providers, play an important role in disease surveillance and are a vital resource in helping to understand and control infectious disease.
- Patients and families often turn to nurses as trusted healthcare resources and will rely on nurses as sources of accurate information about the spread of disease.
- NNPBC does not endorse rumour or speculation as this is potentially damaging instead encouraging nurses and other healthcare providers to follow news reports put out by the BC Ministry of Health, the BCCDC, their employers and the WHO.



- NNPBC strongly supports evidence-based decision making and reporting. Assumptions about the virus and/or those who have it are damaging, divisive and are not in line with nursing values.
- NNPBC supports the WHO recommendations to wash hands regularly and well, cover the mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing, and to cook meat and eggs thoroughly in order to help prevent the spread of disease.
- NNPBC encourages all nurses to follow procedures and policies as outlined by both the WHO and BCCDC.
- Nurses should review their worksite/workplace exposure policies and procedures regularly.

Further Reading/Resources

- [WHO Coronavirus information](#)
- [Government of Canada update on Coronavirus](#)
- [BCCDC Information on Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [BCNU Information for Members on Coronavirus](#)
- [BC Minister of Health Statement on Coronavirus](#)

Please feel free to direct questions and additional comments to info@nnpbc.com.