Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert

We are monitoring a respiratory illness outbreak caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19). We update this alert every day with the latest medical advice and official reports.

Alert status
Active

Last updated
05 March 2020

On this page

Current status

In Australia

As at 09:00 hrs on 5 March 2020, we have 52 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19), including 2 deaths in Australia.

- 22 in New South Wales
- 1 in Northern Territory
- 8 in Queensland
- 4 in South Australia
- 1 in Tasmania
- 6 in Victoria
- 10 associated with Diamond Princess

Further details:

- 15 of the initially reported cases in Australia all had a direct or indirect travel history to Wuhan, China
- 10 cases are associated with the Diamond Princess cruise ship repatriation flight from Japan
    - 1 of the Diamond Princess repatriated cases sadly died
- 12 cases are reported to have had a direct or indirect travel history to Iran
- 6 cases are reported to have had a travel history to countries including Singapore, Europe, the

United Arab Emirates, Japan and Republic of Korea

- 6 cases did not have a reported history of overseas travel, with 4 of these cases associated with an aged care facility in NSW and the remaining 2 cases reported as health care workers at other health care facilities in NSW
    - 1 aged care facility resident in NSW has sadly died
- the source of infection for the remaining 3 cases is currently under investigation

Of the total cases reported, 22 of these cases are reported to have recovered. Sadly 2 people have died.

For questions about testing or the welfare of people with the virus, contact yourstate or territory health authority.

In the news

- The Prime Minister has announced new travel restrictions as of 5 March 2020.
- The Prime Minister has announced the activation of the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has issued a statement on travel restrictions

For more information, read the latest transcripts and media releases from our Chief Medical Officer and our Deputy Chief Medical Officer about coronavirus (COVID-19) in our news section.

You can also see updates in media releases and transcripts fromMinister Hunt relating to coronoavirus on the Health Ministers' site.

Across the world

> Across the world, there have been more than 95,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) and 3,200 reported deaths.

The majority of cases and deaths associated with COVID-19 have been reported from mainland China.

There have been more than 14,800 cases, including approximately 270 deaths, reported from 80 countries and regions outside mainland China.

> Of confirmed cases reported globally, the case fatality rate is approximately 3.4%. The case fatality rate in countries and regions outside mainland China is approximately 1.8%.

The majority of new cases continue to be reported from Republic of Korea, Italy and Iran.

If you’re planning any overseas travel, or have returned from an at risk country, see and follow the travellers and visitors information below.

Why is there an alert

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

The Australian Government has issued this health alert as a precaution, based on the latest and best medical advice.

Learn more about coronavirus (COVID-19)

Find out more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to protect yourself

Separate fact from fiction by reading coronavirus myth busters on the World Health Organization website. This includes information about when and how to wear a surgical mask

We also have a series of information sheets to help you, your family, health professionals, aged care workers, educational facilities, and the travel industry.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources

A collection of resources for the general public, health professionals and industry about coronavirus (COVID-19).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources in Simplified or Traditional Chinese

A collection of resources about coronavirus (COVID-19) in Simplified or Traditional Chinese.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources in Farsi

A collection of resources about coronavirus (COVID-19) in Farsi.

Information for the health sector

View our resources for health professionals, including pathology providers and healthcare managers.

> Also read the 2019-nCoV National Guidelines for Public Health Units that are regularly updated by the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA).

For information about the epidemiology of cases in Australia and overseas, read the weekly epidemiological reports.

Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (the COVID-19 Plan) was endorsed by the AHPPC on 17 February 2020.

CDNA met on 3 March 2020 and discussed the definition of Health Care Workers in the Series of National Guidelines (SoNG). Noting the SoNG are intended for public health workers, they are still used more broadly by other health professionals. Members discussed risk profile assessment and agreed on the following:

- these recommendations apply to workers who come into contact with those in residential aged care and other health care settings
- health care workers are defined as workers who come into contact with patients in a hospital or residential care setting including aged care facilities
- all healthcare workers should observe usual infection prevention and control practices in the workplace

The Australian Government will continue to monitor the emerging information and evidence closely. It will work with jurisdictions, through key committees and other relevant experts, to adapt the COVID-19 Plan as new information becomes available.

> **Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
>
> The Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (the COVID-19 Plan) guides the Australian health sector response.

If you are at risk

In Australia, the people most at risk of getting the virus are those who have recently been in in a high risk country/region and people who have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus.

If you have returned from a country or region that is at higher risk for COVID-19 you can not attend work if you work in a setting with vulnerable people.

From previous experience with other coronaviruses, other categories of people at most risk of serious infection are:

- people with compromised immune systems (e.g. cancer)
- elderly people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with diagnosed chronic medical conditions
- very young children and babies*
- people in group residential settings
- people in detention facilities

*At this stage the risk to children and babies, and the role children play in the transmission of COVID-19, is not clear. However, there has so far been a low rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children relative to the broader population.

Travellers and visitors

On 5 March 2020, the Australian Government extended existing travel restrictions to include the Republic of Korea. All travel restrictions will be reviewed again before 13 March 2020.

The Australian Government considers the following countries to be at higher risk for COVID-19:

- Mainland China
- Iran
- Italy
- Republic of Korea

There are travel restrictions for travellers from mainland China, Iran and Republic of Korea.

If you are returning from mainland China or Iran you should isolate yourself for 14 days after leaving mainland China or Iran.

If you are travelling from the Republic of Korea, on or after 5 March, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the time you left the Republic of Korea.

If you are arriving in Australia from Italy, you must present for health screening at the border as directed.

If you are returning from Italy you do not need to isolate yourself but you can not attend work for 14 days if you work as a healthcare worker or as a residential aged care worker.

This advice should be read in conjunction with the 'What you need to know' and 'Isolation guidance' information sheets.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has raised the level of advice for:

- Italy
- Iran
- Japan
- Republic of Korea (Daegu and Cheongdo)
- Mainland China
- Mongolia

> Australians travelling overseas are encouraged to regularly review the Smartraveller website and subscribe for updates.

China, Iran and Republic of Korea

Do not travel to mainland China, Iran and Daegu (Republic of Korea). This is the latest China travel advice, Iran travel advice and Daegu travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

For Australians already in Iran, DFAT recommends travellers depart while commercial operations are available.

Foreign nationals (excluding permanent residents) who are in mainland China, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through mainland China.

Foreign nationals (excluding permanent residents) who left Iran on or after 1 March, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through Iran.

Foreign nationals (excluding permanent residents of Australia) who are in the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020 will not be allowed to enter Australia for 14 days from the time they have left or transited through the Republic of Korea.

Australian citizens, permanent residents, and their immediate family (including spouses, dependants and legal guardians) will still be able to enter Australia but will be required to isolate themselves for 14 days after the date they left China, Iran or the Republic of Korea.

If you:

- hold a visa for Australia or have applied for a visa, read the coronavirus fact sheet for visa holders and applicants
- are planning to travel to or transit through Australia, read the current travel restrictions

- plan to travel overseas, check the latest travel advice
- are concerned about someone overseas, call the DFAT consular emergency line

If you are on board an international flight and show signs of an infectious disease:

- the airline must report you to biosecurity officers
- biosecurity officers will assess you before you get off the plane
- you may be isolated or referred to a hospital

Australians on cruise ships

DFAT is providing consular assistance to Australians hospitalised and quarantined overseas because of COVID-19.

The Diamond Princess cruise ship

The Australian Government has assisted 170 people to depart Japan. They arrived in Darwin on a Qantas flight on 20 February 2020 and are in quarantine at the Howard Springs Accommodation Village (Manigurr-ma Village Howard Springs).

Any passengers from the Diamond Princess who were not on the Qantas charter flight:

- will not be allowed on other flights to Australia before Wednesday 4 March 2020
- need to complete a 14 day quarantine period before travelling to Australia
- will be subject to health screening on entry if they have not completed the 14 day quarantine requirement
- may be subject to a Human Biosecurity Control Order under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, that can include conditions restricting movement or requiring isolation.

Australians who are medically cleared from the Japanese health system will be provided a medical clearance form for presentation to officials upon arrival at the Australian border.

The Australian Embassy in Tokyo is providing consular assistance to a number of Australians hospitalised in Japan due to coronavirus.

Australians in quarantine

164 passengers from the Diamond Princess (Australian citizens, dual nationals and family members) began a 14 day quarantine period at the Howard Springs Accommodation Village (Manigurr-ma Village Howard Springs).

10 passengers have tested positive to COVID-19 since their arrival in Darwin. 9 have been transferred to their home state for medical treatment.

The facility has strong isolation procedures in place.

To support the quarantine process Howard Springs Accommodation Village (Darwin) (Manigurr-ma Village Howard Springs) will act as a human health response zone.

International students

Year 11 and 12 students

Year 11 and 12 students who remain in China (outside Hubei Province) due to Australian travel restrictions have been offered a strict pathway to resume their studies. This is in recognition of the importance of the final 2 years of school.

Students who are completing their senior secondary schooling can apply for an exemption to the 1 February 2020 COVID-19 travel restrictions applied to foreign nationals who have been in mainland China (except Hubei Province). The exemptions will be considered on a case by case basis.

Australian Border Force has information for student visa holders.

We are delivering more Australian education services online and offshore for international students. To find out more and for support, go to coronavirus updates for international students on the Study in Australia website.

What we are doing

Australia is well prepared.

Our first class health system includes mechanisms for early detection and effective management of cases and contacts. Our plans include a range of interventions to minimise transmission and mitigate the impact of the outbreak.

Australian Government agencies and state and territory governments are working together to coordinate an evidence-based response. This includes:

- providing information in English and Chinese based on the latest medical advice, including through Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat and Chinese newspapers
- applying a 14-day isolation period to people at risk of getting coronavirus
- applying travel restrictions to reduce the number of travellers from mainland China and Iran
- tracing coronavirus cases
- continuing to screen travellers who arrive in Australia
- continuing with border surveillance
- applying enhanced border measures at international air and sea ports, including announcements and signs

A total of over 1.4 million P2 and surgical masks have been made available from the National Medical Stockpile as part of the Government's response to COVID-19. The Government is also investigating further sources of supply for personal protective equipment, both internationally and domestically.

State and territory health authorities are:

- testing anyone who shows symptoms of the virus
- monitoring close contacts of confirmed cases every day

Find out more

You can also visit our Facebook and Twitter pages or call us if you still have questions about coronavirus:

Coronavirus Health Information Line

Call this line if you are seeking information on novel coronavirus. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

1800 020 080

View contact

Departmental media enquiries

Contact for members of the media

news [at]
health.gov.au

02 6289 7400

View contact

Tags:

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