Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert

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

Alert status
Active

Last updated
14 March 2020

On this page

Current status

Last updated 10:00am AEDT, 14 March 2020.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic.

Currently, Australia does not have widespread community transmission of COVID-19. To help slow the spread, the Australian Government has advised, effective from Monday 16 March, organised, non-essential gatherings should be limited to 500 people.

Non-essential meetings or conferences of critical workforces, such as health care professionals and emergency services, should also be limited. This advice does not include workplaces, schools, universities, shops, supermarkets, public transport and airports.

To protect vulnerable Australians, the Government has also advised reducing visitors to all residential aged care facilities and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Australian Government is implementing an economic response to the coronavirus totalling $17.6 billion across the forward estimates. The package is designed to protect the economy by maintaining confidence, supporting investment and keeping people in jobs.

The Government is also delivering a comprehensive $2.4 billion health package to protect all Australians, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those with chronic conditions and Indigenous communities, from the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Australian Government has secured additional surgical, P2 and N95 masks for the National Medical Stockpile, for medical and aged care professionals to care for patients with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The Prime Minister has announced the activation of the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Read the latest 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 from Minister Hunt relating to coronavirus on the Health Ministers' site.

In Australia

> As at 06:30 hrs on 14 March 2020, there were 197 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19), including 3 deaths, in Australia.

- 1 in the Australian Capital Territory
- 91 in New South Wales
- 0 in the Northern Territory*
- 35 in Queensland#
- 16 in South Australia#
- 4 in Tasmania
- 36 in Victoria*#
- 14 in Western Australia#

*Note that under National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System reporting requirements, cases are reported based on their Australian jurisdiction of residence rather than where they were detected. For example, a case reported previously in the NT in a NSW resident is counted in the national figures as a NSW case.

Includes Diamond Princess repatriation cases: Qld (3), SA (1), Vic (4), WA (2, including 1 death).

Further details:

- 15 of the initially reported cases in Australia all had a direct or indirect travel history to Wuhan, China

- 10 cases, including 1 death, are associated with the Diamond Princess cruise ship repatriation flight from Japan
- 18 cases are reported to have had a direct or indirect travel link to Iran
- 92 cases are reported to have had a direct or indirect travel link to other countries and regions.
- 32 cases, including 2 deaths, do not have a reported history of overseas travel
    - 8 of these cases are associated with an aged care facility in NSW. 2 residents of this facility have sadly died
    - 2 cases are either directly or indirectly associated with attendance at a workshop
    - 22 cases are close contacts of known cases, with further details pending
- The likely place of exposure for a further 30 newly reported cases is under investigation

Of the 197 Australian cases reported, 27 of these cases are reported to have recovered.

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

Across the world

> Across the world, there have been more than 140,500 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) and more than 5,300 reported deaths.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, the majority of cases (80,981) and deaths (3,173) associated with COVID-19 have been reported from mainland China.

There have been more than 59,600 cases, including approximately 2,100 deaths, reported from 125 countries and regions outside mainland China.

The majority of deaths outside mainland China have been in Italy and Iran.

Mainland China continues to show a steady decline in the report of new cases with very few cases being reported in the past week.

The Republic of Korea appears to have reached a peak in its epidemic at the end of February, with daily cases steadily declining.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the United States and several other countries in Europe continue to report large increases in cases.

> Of confirmed cases reported globally, the case fatality rate is approximately 3.7%.

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.

On 27 February 2020, the Prime Minister announced the activation of the 'Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

> On 11 March 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic.

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), including translated resources.

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.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources in Korean

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources in Italian

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

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).

Read the Chief Medical Officer Professor Brendan Murphy's letter to doctors about the COVID-19 outbreak and the Commonwealth's support for the central role doctors play in our national response.

Read the joint statement from the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Minister Colbeck, and Australian Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy, about ensuring the delivery of safe, quality care to senior Australians.

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.

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, as they have higher rates of chronic illness
- 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

AHPPC advised that the current travel restrictions for people returning from mainland China, Iran, Republic of Korea and Italy are appropriate.

The Government will continue to follow the advice of AHPPC and will not be expanding travel restrictions at this time.

Further travel restrictions will not significantly help limit community transmission of COVID-19 in Australia.

Entering Australia

The Australian Government has travel restrictions in place for foreign nationals entering Australia from China, Iran, Korea and Italy.

As part of our ongoing strategy of containment and minimising risk to the Australian community, we are implementing additional screening of passengers at Australian airports.

Australian Border Force liaison officers at overseas airports will work with airlines to identify travellers who should not board.

Airlines will also be required to refuse uplift for anyone identified as being unwell.

Any passengers identified as unwell on the flight will be identified and referred for further assessment upon arrival.

Returning from higher risk areas

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, Republic of Korea and Italy.

Foreign nationals will not be able to enter Australia within 14 days of being in these countries, with the exception of permanent residents, immediate family members of Australians, and airline crew.

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

If you are an Australian citizen 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 an Australian citizen who left or transited through Italy on or after 11 March you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the time you left Italy.

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

Moderate risk

The Australian Government considers all other countries to be at moderate risk for COVID-19.

If you have recently travelled to any other country, monitor your health for 14 days after leaving that country. If you develop a fever or cough, seek medical advice urgently and isolate yourself.

Advice for Australians travelling overseas

Travelling in the current context presents increased risks, including of significant travel disruptions and delays.

> On Friday 13 March, the Australian Government advised people to reconsider any non-essential international travel.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has raised the level of advice for a number of countries. Conditions are changing rapidly and further updates are likely.

> Anyone planning to travel should readSmartraveller advice for all destinations and transit points and subscribe for updates.

Australians on cruise ships

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

Grand Princess Cruise Ship

DFAT is waiting on advice on whether any of the four Australians on board the Grand Princess cruise ship, moored off the Californian coast, have contracted COVID-19.

The Australian Consulate-General in San Francisco stands ready to provide consular assistance to Australian citizens on board.

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:

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

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

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