

COMMUNIQUE

Ministry of Health and Wellness

Outbreak of pneumonia caused by a new Coronavirus in China

On 31 December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia of unknown etiology was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. On 9 January 2020, the Chinese Authorities reported in the media that the cause of this viral pneumonia was initially identified as a new type of coronavirus, which is different from any other human coronaviruses discovered so far. Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses that can cause diseases ranging from common cold to the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

The clinical signs and symptoms of the patients reported in this cluster are mainly fever, with a few patients having difficulty in breathing and chest radiographs showing bilateral lung infiltrates.

The precautions to be taken are as follows:

- Avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections;
- Frequent hand-washing, especially, after direct contact with sick people or their environment;
- Avoiding close contact with live or dead farm or wild animals;
- Travellers with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing and wash hands).

The World Health Organization does not recommend any specific health measures for travellers. In case of symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness before, during or after travel, the travellers are encouraged to seek medical advice and share travel history with their health care provider.

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