Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Factsheet for school students and children

Last updated 13 February 2020

An outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) was detected in Wuhan, China in late December 2019. Cases have been reported predominantly in mainland China, as well as other countries, including confirmed cases in Victoria, Australia.

What is this virus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The virus seen in mainland China has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people infected live in, or travelled to, mainland China. There have been cases of (COVID-2019) reported in other countries. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath. Symptoms can take up to 14 days to develop.

What if my child is well, and is returning to school or early childhood education services after being in mainland China or other countries with cases in the past 14 days?

The following children and students should self-isolate and are advised to stay at home and avoid public settings including attendance at schools and early childhood education services:

- People who were in Hubei Province until 14 days after they were last in Hubei Province;
- People who were in mainland China on or after 1 February 2020 until 14 days after they were last in mainland China;
- Close contacts of confirmed cases until 14 days after last close contact with the confirmed case

Children and students who are well and have travelled to any other areas where there have been reported cases, are NOT recommended to be excluded from schools and early childhood education services unless the following applies:

- The person is a confirmed case of coronavirus disease
- The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus disease in the past 14 days.

What if my child feels sick now or within 14 days of being in mainland China?

- Seek medical attention but first place a mask on your child if you have one and call the doctor or hospital before you attend. Tell them your child has been in mainland China.
- When you get to the hospital or doctor's clinic, tell them where your child has travelled in mainland China. Ensure a mask is placed on your child before or as soon as you arrive at the medical facility.

If your child has severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath:

- Call 000 and request an ambulance, and
- Inform the paramedics where your child has been in China.

How can I help prevent the spread of COVID-2019?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence. The most important actions are:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow

Where can I get more information?

For Victorian updates to the current incident, go to: https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus

For Department of Education and Training updates:
https://education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx

For national updates: https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus

For international updates: https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus

WHO resources https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus