

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What you need to know

While we are still learning more about this new virus, we do know the risk of the virus spreading in New Zealand is very low.

How worried should I be?

- Your chances of catching the coronavirus in New Zealand are very low.
- It is highly unlikely you will catch the virus walking down the street.
- Coronavirus appears to be as infectious as the flu and the symptoms are similar – fever, cough and shortness of breath. You are only likely to catch it if you are near to someone with the virus. Most people catch the virus from someone at home, a close workmate or someone they spend time with.
- People will not be moving around the community if they are suspected or confirmed of having the virus – they will be in isolation. Their family and anyone they may have infected will also be asked to stay at home.

How serious is coronavirus?

- Most people have a mild to moderate illness with flu-like symptoms.
- People of all ages are being infected, but older people and those with medical conditions seem most likely to get seriously ill.

How do I protect myself and my family?

Everyone should protect themselves from the virus, as you would for the 'flu.

- Washing your hands regularly, or using hand sanitiser, is the best way to avoid this illness.
- As with other illnesses, do not go to work or school, or see visitors, if you are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or clothing, and wash hands afterwards.
- Avoid being near to people who are sick.
- Washing your hands often and covering coughs and sneezes will do more to protect you from the virus than a mask.
- If you are sharing food: use utensils to serve the food, and keep your personal spoon, fork, or chopsticks separate, to avoid transmission through saliva.

What should I do if I think I could have coronavirus?

- If you start to experience mild symptoms, then stay at home and call the dedicated, 24/7 free Healthline number for advice: 0800 358 5453. Interpreters are available on request.
- If you start to experience more severe symptoms arrange to see a doctor urgently. Call ahead and mention your travel history. Difficulty breathing requires immediate medical attention and can be a sign of pneumonia.

Where can I find more information?

Information is updated regularly on the [Ministry of Health website](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus).

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