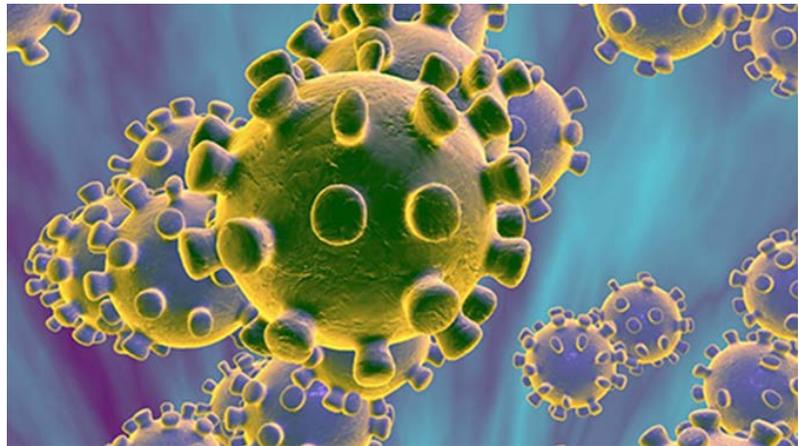


COVID-19 – Fact Sheet

Background

On 31 December 2019, WHO was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China. A novel coronavirus was identified as the cause by Chinese authorities on 7 January 2020 and the virus was temporarily named “2019-nCoV”. On February 11, the disease caused by the virus was named Coronavirus Disease 2019, or “COVID-19”.



On 30 January 2020, the outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) by the WHO Director-General. The latest global figures on the emergency can be found [here](#).

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever and cough. In more serious cases, the virus can cause pneumonia and even death. Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

If you have recently visited an area where many people have COVID-19 infection and you have respiratory symptoms, please seek medical care by The National Institute of Public Health Infoline for anyone in need of advice on coronavirus, Infoline is available daily at: +420 724 810 106 and +420 725 191 367. The incubation period of the disease (the time between infection and the onset of symptoms of disease) can be up to 14 days based on current information.

Severity

Most of the infected people develop a mild respiratory illness, while about 15% appear to progress to severe disease, including pneumonia, respiratory failure and in some cases death.

Latest data indicate a 2% mortality linked to the virus, although this percentage is subject to change.

Virus spread

The main driver of human-to-human transmission, based on currently available data, is from symptomatic people, or people showing symptoms of the disease.

COVID-19 can most likely transmit through:

- direct physical contact;
- direct contact with respiratory droplets when an infected person sneezes, coughs or exhales; and
- indirect contact by touching contaminated surfaces where the virus may survive for a very short period.

This means that the virus can spread from one person to the next, especially in crowded, closed off spaces or from 'close contacts' who spend a longer period of time very close (less than 1 metre) to an infected person.

People receiving packages from China are not at risk of contracting the new coronavirus. Coronaviruses are known for not surviving long on objects such as letters or packages.

WHO Regional Office for Europe's response

WHO has been responding to this outbreak since its start, bringing resources together from across the Organization. Focus has been on:

- increasing understanding of the disease;
- providing advice to countries, individuals and travellers;
- keeping countries informed;
- coordinating with partners; and
- helping countries prepare.

The Regional Office has established an **Incident Management System Team** working 24/7 working in close coordination with all levels of WHO, to:

1. support **all countries** in their preparedness to ensure that they have the capacity to identify, isolate and care for patients early and efficiently. In particular, we connect countries to reference laboratories in the Region, facilitate shipment of samples, and provide testing kits for diagnostic support;

2. prioritize technical and financial support to **vulnerable countries** to fill essential gaps in their national emergency preparedness and response capacity, especially in surveillance, laboratory, infection prevention and control, and risk communication;
3. provide guidance and advice to **affected countries**, sustaining their public health interventions to limit human-to-human transmission and contain the outbreak, while ensuring the resilience of health systems;
4. continue to **monitor** the situation and facilitate transparent and timely information sharing; and
5. **collaborate and coordinate** with partners and establish a European platform to contribute to the global scientific work on therapeutics, diagnostics and vaccine.

Resources

- [Regional Office for Europe: news updates, travel advice and protective measures for Europe](#)
- [Headquarters: latest global updates and advice](#)