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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) – UPDATE #2

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in humans and animals. Human coronavirus illnesses are generally mild such as the common cold.

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. It is a new strain of coronaviruses that hasn't previously been identified in humans.

COVID-19 is closely related to SARS and in the same family of viruses as MERS. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms range from a mild cough to pneumonia. Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly. There is no treatment. There is evidence that it spreads from person to person. Good hygiene can prevent infection.

In Australia, the people most at risk of getting the virus are those who have recently been in mainland China or been in close contact with someone who is a confirmed case of coronavirus.

As at 26 February 2020, the risk of transmission in Western Australia is low.

The WA Department of Health is working closely with the Commonwealth and other State and Territory government agencies to prepare for a response to an outbreak of COVID-19. The Communicable Disease Control Directorate, WA Department of Health is leading the response to COVID-19 in WA.

New Information:

- As of 25 February 2020, there is one confirmed case in WA, associated with the Diamond Princess cruise ship. An additional 325 people tested for COVID-19 in WA have returned a negative result.
- As of 25 February 2020, 22 confirmed cases have been detected in Australia: four cases from NSW, eight cases from QLD, three cases from SA, six cases from VIC, and one case from WA. The initial 15 cases had either a direct or indirect links to Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. All the initial 15 cases have cleared their infection. Seven cases have been reported among passengers who were on the Diamond Princess cruise ship repatriation flight from Japan. The latter cases are being repatriated to their home jurisdictions for isolation and care.
- Australian guidelines have been expanded to recommend clinicians consider testing people with a clinically compatible illness who travelled to any of the following countries in the 14 days before onset of symptoms: **Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.**



The recommendation does not apply to passengers who have only been in transit through an airport in these countries.

- The Commonwealth has extended the following travel restrictions for people entering Australia, until 28 February 2020:
 - all travellers who have left or transited through mainland China on or after 1 February 2020 must self-quarantine until 14 days after leaving China.
 - Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family who have left or transited through mainland China will be able to enter Australia, as will airline crews who have been using appropriate personal protective equipment.
 - foreign nationals (excluding permanent residents of Australia) will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through mainland China.
- As of 23 February 2020, the advice of the DFAT for travel to Japan and South Korea (Republic of Korea) is **'level 2 – exercise a high degree of caution'**. It is also advised that travellers reconsider the need to travel to Daegu and Chengdu due to significant outbreaks of COVID-19 in those cities.
- The advice of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regarding travel to mainland China remains **'level 4 – do not travel'**.
- The best way to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 is to practise good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough etiquette. The WA Department of Health does not recommend the use of facemasks for the general community (who have no symptoms of respiratory illness), to prevent the risk of contracting COVID-19.

Where can I get more information?

- Visit the WA Department of Health website at https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus
- Commonwealth Government at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>
- Call the WA Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 300 243

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