

# 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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