

Coronavirus (COVID-19): latest information and advice

Information for the public on the outbreak of coronavirus in China, including the current situation in the UK and information about the virus and its symptoms.

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Situation in the UK

Number of cases

[Four further patients in England have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total number of cases in the UK to 13.](#)

If more cases are confirmed in the UK, it will be announced as soon as possible by the Chief Medical Officer of the affected country.

As of 26 February, a total of 7,132 people have been tested in the UK, of which 7,119 were confirmed negative and 13 positive. These figures now include the 4 cases from the Diamond Princess cruise ship.

The Department of Health and Social Care will be publishing updated data on this page every day at 2pm until further notice.

Risk level

Based on the World Health Organization's declaration that this is a public health emergency of international concern, the [UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the UK from low to moderate](#).

This permits the government to plan for all eventualities. The risk to individuals remains low.

We have been working in close collaboration with international colleagues and the World Health Organization to monitor the situation in China and around the world.

Returning travellers

Based on the scientific advice of the [Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies \(SAGE\)](#) the UK Chief Medical Officers are advising anyone who has travelled to the UK from mainland China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia or Macau in the last 14 days and is experiencing cough or fever or shortness of breath, to stay indoors and call NHS 111, even if symptoms are mild.

We are carrying out enhanced monitoring of direct flights from these areas. Passengers will be told how to report any symptoms they develop during the flight, at the time of arrival, or after leaving the airport.

These areas have been identified because of the volume of air travel from affected areas, understanding of other travel routes and number of reported cases. This list will be kept under review.

If you have returned from these specific areas since 19 February, you should call NHS 111 and stay indoors and avoid contact with other people even if you do not have symptoms:

- Iran
- specific [lockdown areas in northern Italy](#) as designated by the Government of Italy
- ['special care zones' in South Korea](#) as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea
- Hubei province (returned in the past 14 days)

If you have returned from these areas since 19 February and develop symptoms, however mild, you should stay indoors at home and avoid contact with other people immediately and call NHS 111. You do not need to follow this advice if you have no symptoms.

- northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini)
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

Health protection regulations

On 10 February, the [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock](#), announced strengthened legal powers to protect public health.

[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#) have been put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.

Information about the virus

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China.

The [NHS website](#) has more information about how coronavirus is spread and answers [common questions about the virus](#).

Advice for travellers

British people travelling and living overseas following the outbreak of novel coronavirus should check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice](#).

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised UK nationals to leave China where possible. If the situation continues to escalate the pressure on the Chinese health system may intensify, and it may also become harder for people to travel.

This change does not affect our advice for those returning from Wuhan or mainland China.

Travellers from Wuhan and Hubei Province and other specified areas

If you have travelled from:

- Iran
- specific [lockdown areas in northern Italy](#) as designated by the Government of Italy
- [‘special care zones’ in South Korea](#) as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea
- Hubei province (returned in the past 14 days)

You should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area

In Scotland phone your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. If you are in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885.

Please follow this advice even if you do not have symptoms of the virus.

Lockdown areas in northern Italy:

- in Lombardy: Codogno, Castiglione d'Adda, Casalpusterlengo, Fombio, Maleo, Somaglia, Bertinico, Terranova dei Passerini, Castelgerundo and San Fiorano
- in Veneto: Vo' Euganeo

Special care zones in South Korea:

- Daegu
- Cheongdo

Travellers from other parts of China and other specified areas

This advice applies to travellers who have returned to the UK from the following areas:

- China
- Thailand
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Macau

If you have returned to the UK from any of these areas in the last 14 days and develop symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, you should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country

In Scotland phone your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. If you are in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885.

Please follow this advice even if your symptoms are minor.

If you have returned from these areas since 19 February and develop symptoms please follow this advice. You do not need to follow this advice if you have no symptoms:

- northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini)
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

Read more about what you should do if you're asked to [self-isolate](#).

Summary of action taken

We have introduced advanced monitoring at airports with direct flights from China.

A team of public health experts has been established in Heathrow to support anyone travelling in from China who feels unwell. These hubs will bring in rotational teams of 7 clinicians, working in shifts, who will be on hand to support patients on arrival. This is in addition to medical staff who are already permanently in place at all UK airports and the advice issued to all UK airports for people travelling to and from China.

The government has issued clinical guidance for the detection and diagnosis of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and infection prevention and control.

The Chief Medical Officer, Medical Director at PHE and Medical Director at NHSE/I have issued advice via a CAS (Central Alerting System) alert to frontline staff to increase awareness of the situation and any actions to take.

Most people who develop symptoms will get them after leaving the airport and so the priority is providing UK residents and travellers with the latest information to make sure they know what to do if they experience symptoms, and the NHS and PHE have an established plan to respond to someone who becomes unwell.

China has also introduced port-of-exit screening so people already exhibiting symptoms are not allowed to leave the country.

Diagnosis and analysis

Based on current evidence, novel coronavirus (COVID-19) presents with flu-like symptoms including a fever, a cough, or difficulty breathing. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. Those who have died in Wuhan appear to have had pre-existing health conditions.

The UK is now one of the first countries outside China to have a prototype specific laboratory test for this new disease. Healthcare professionals who are contacted by a patient with symptoms following travel to Wuhan have been advised to submit samples to PHE for testing. Individuals should be treated in isolation

After the experience of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, PHE developed a series of diagnostic tests to detect any member of the family of coronaviruses. These have been used for several years, and were able to detect the first UK case of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in 2012.

With the first reported publication of the genome sequence of a 2019 novel coronavirus, PHE was able to rapidly develop further specific tests for this virus, working with WHO and global network of laboratories.

When a clinician suspects novel coronavirus (COVID-19), they take samples from the nose, throat and deeper respiratory samples, package and send them safely to PHE Colindale. PHE can provide a laboratory result from this specific virus on the same working day.

PHE also has the capability to sequence the viral genome and compare this to published sequences from China, if a case occurs. This will provide valuable information on any mutations in the virus over time and allow an improved understanding of how it spreads.