

January 22, 2020

## Health Advisory: Guidance for Clinicians to Report Possible Cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

### **GUIDANCE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS OUTBREAK UNFOLDS**

#### **Summary**

- An expanding outbreak of respiratory infections with a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, China is being closely monitored by the WHO, CDC, and state public health officials.
- As of January 22, there have been hundreds of confirmed human infections with nCoV in China with exported cases in the United States, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea.
- Most cases have been linked to a large seafood and animal market in China, suggesting a zoonotic origin.
- Recent evidence, including family clusters and infected healthcare workers, suggest that human-to-human transmission is occurring.
- Symptoms include fever and signs of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); case-patients also develop pneumonia, although the full spectrum of clinical illness remains unknown.
- Active screening of incoming travelers from Wuhan has begun at select airports, including Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta.
- Clinicians who suspect 2019nCoV infection in a patient should report them immediately to the Georgia Department of Public Health at (DPH) 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) and ask for a Medical Epidemiologist.

#### **Background**

An outbreak of pneumonia due to infection with a novel coronavirus (nCoV) began in Wuhan China in December 2019. Since then, Chinese health authorities have confirmed hundreds of infections with increasing deaths. Most patients had epidemiologic links to a large seafood and animal market suggesting a zoonotic origin of the virus. The market has since been closed for cleaning. A growing number of patients reportedly have not had exposure to the animal markets and many healthcare workers have become infected, suggesting that person to person spread is occurring. Outside of China, cases of nCoV have been reported in the United States, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan and South Korea.

To detect possible cases of nCoV infection early and prevent further spread, the United States has begun actively screening incoming travelers from Wuhan at five select airports, including Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta. Due to the Lunar New Year holiday, travel will be increased to and from China in the following weeks. Health screenings (for fever primarily) will occur at the airport for anyone arriving from Wuhan, China. Travelers that are not symptomatic will be given further instruction on how to proceed if they develop symptoms while in the country.

CDC issued a level 2 travel health notice (“practice enhanced precautions”) for Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China with additional information:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/novel-coronavirus-china>.

## Recommendations for Clinicians

1. Obtain a detailed travel history for any patients being evaluated with fever and acute respiratory illness. The Travel Clinical Assistant (TCA) can help identify current outbreaks and endemic diseases of concern around the globe. (<https://dph.georgia.gov/TravelClinicalAssistant>).
2. Patients who meet the following criteria should be considered a patient under investigation (PUI). Note that this information will be updated frequently, most current PUI criteria can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>:
  1. Fever AND symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and in the last 14 days before symptom onset:
    - a. History of travel from Wuhan City, China
    - b. Close contact with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV while that person was ill.
  2. Fever OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and in the last 14 days before symptom onset had close contact with an ill laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient.
3. Immediately notify both infection control personnel at your facility and the DPH at 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) in the event of a PUI. Be sure to ask for a DPH Medical Epidemiologist. DPH will coordinate risk assessment and laboratory testing with the CDC. For guidance for collection, handling and testing of clinical specimens, click here <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>. Currently, laboratory testing of clinical samples can only occur at the CDC. DPH will coordinate sample transport from your facility to the CDC lab.
4. Due to undetermined transmission dynamics, CDC recommends a cautious approach to PUIs. Appropriate PPE should be utilized by the patient and healthcare professional. Such patients should be asked to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified and be evaluated in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room if available. Healthcare personnel entering the room should use standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions, and use eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield).
5. Any hospital with a negative pressure room in the ED can assess these patients. If the patient is at a facility without a negative pressure room, then isolate the patient with a mask until they can be transferred by EMS to an ED. Call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) and ask to speak to a Medical Epidemiologist immediately for assistance.
6. If you have any questions about a PUI, please call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) and ask for a Medical Epidemiologist.

## For more information

- CDC's guidance for healthcare professionals: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/guidance-hcp.html>
- For the latest CDC updates on the outbreak: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDC's guidance for isolation precautions: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html>

Clinicians who become aware of cases similar to those described above should report them immediately to 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) and ask for a Medical Epidemiologist.