

# NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) – FAQ

**February 7, 2020**

## **What is coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause illness ranging from the simple common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). We see many different types of coronaviruses here in York Region in Ontario and throughout Canada.

## **What is novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?**

The type of coronavirus originally linked to Wuhan, China is a new (novel) strain that experts are learning more about every day.

## **What are the symptoms associated with this illness?**

Common symptoms of coronaviruses vary based on the type of coronavirus, but can often include symptoms like fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat and headache.

Authorities are currently reporting that the most common symptoms of the novel coronavirus include: fever, new or worsening cough or shortness of breath.

## **How are coronaviruses spread?**

### **Known Coronaviruses:**

These types of coronaviruses are responsible for causing the common cold and can spread from person to person, through respiratory secretions and droplets (e.g, a runny nose or droplets generated through coughing or sneezing) that then contact another person's eyes, nose or mouth

### **Novel Coronavirus:**

As this is a new disease, much about it is still unknown. While there is evidence of some person-to-person transmission, it is yet to be confirmed how *easily* the disease spreads from person-to-person; right now the evidence is showing transmission only among very close contacts (i.e. people who provided direct physical care to or live with a case).

## **Are there any cases of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Ontario?**

Visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus) for an up to date list of how many confirmed and suspect cases there are in Ontario.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/health](https://york.ca/health)



York Region Public Health continues to actively monitor the situation in collaboration with provincial agencies.

**Why is the risk of acquiring the virus in the community low for York Region residents?**

At this time there is no evidence of community spread in Canada. This means that all confirmed cases here in Canada have links to the affected area in China (Hubei province). Any person who is suspected or tested for the virus is immediately isolated and their close contacts are very closely followed and isolated if they develop any symptoms.

**Are the outbreaks of Coronavirus I'm hearing about in Long Term Care or Retirement homes the same as the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?**

The novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not reported before. Other types of coronaviruses and respiratory infections are very common in Canada at this time of year. Reports of coronavirus on our weekly reports on our website, or that you may hear about at a retirement home or long term care home are not related to 2019-nCoV.

**What should I be doing to protect myself, family and the community?**

All York Region residents can take the following steps to protect themselves not only from new and emerging diseases but also from the common cold and the flu (which are on the rise at this time of year):

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, including between your fingers, under your fingernails and your wrists; if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your cough or sneeze using a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve, being sure to cover your mouth; put used tissue in the garbage and wash your hands after or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until your symptoms resolve
- Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing
- Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency of high-touch surfaces such as toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs, countertops, light switches and other shared items using regular household cleaners
- Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with saliva such as toothbrushes, eating utensils drinks/water bottles and towels.

## **Are there any travel advisories?**

For updated information on the latest travel advisories visit <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories/pneumonia-china>

## **Who should get testing?**

If you have symptoms of acute respiratory infection (which include fever **or** new/worsening cough **or** new/worsening shortness of breath) and have recently traveled to Hubei Province, China or have been in close contact with someone who is sick and recently traveled to Hubei Province, contact your health care provider (or visit your local Emergency Department). Try to phone your health care provider (or Emergency Department) in advance of visiting and let them know your travel history, your exact travel dates and location(s), and any contact with an ill person from the Hubei province. Try to take a private vehicle if you can to visit your health care provider.

Testing is not available for individuals who are well.

Please note York Region Public Health offices are not testing for novel coronavirus.

## **What is York Region Public Health doing?**

York Region Public Health is closely monitoring the situation. We are working closely with the Ontario Ministry of Health and receive regular updates from the Ministry as the situation evolves.

York Region Public Health is working closely with our hospitals and community health care providers to keep them informed on the evolving situation. Physicians, hospitals and other health care facilities in York Region are to report a suspected or confirmed case of novel coronavirus to Public Health to take action to follow-up with close contacts to prevent and control further transmission.

## **I am a health care provider with a question about a patient related to 2019-nCoV. who should I contact?**

Any practice-related questions and reports from health care professionals should be directed to York Region Public Health's Control of Infectious Diseases team. If you are a health care professional and have a suspect case of 2019-nCoV, call York Region Public Health immediately at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588** (Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or **905-953-6478** after hours (before 8:30 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday and 24 hours per day on weekends/holidays).

For general inquiries and questions from the public, visit [york.ca/coronavirus](http://york.ca/coronavirus). For additional questions, contact Access York at 1-877-464-9675.

## **The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared novel coronavirus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. What does this mean and does it change anything in York Region?**

The declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the World Health Organization helps to:

- Support a more coordinated international response, including mobilizing resources
- Coordinate international efforts to help support countries whose health systems may require additional support
- Help set global public health standards of practice

At this time, the declaration by WHO does not change our efforts here in York Region. York Region Public Health continues to monitor the situation, work closely with our health system partners to ensure reporting and management of the situation.

There is still no evidence of community spread in Canada and the risk of acquiring the virus in the community remains low for York Region residents.

### **Are there any quarantine recommendations based on travel to China**

As of February 7th 2020, the latest guidance from federal and provincial authorities is as follows:

If you have been in Hubei province in the last 14 days you should:

- 1) Stay at home for 14 days after the time you left Hubei province. This means do not go to work or school, or any social gatherings. If you need to leave your home (for example, to get groceries), take a private vehicle and make sure to stay a safe distance (>2 meters) away from any other person.
- 2) Monitor yourself for signs and symptoms every day for 14 days after the time you left Hubei province
- 3) If you develop any of the following signs or symptoms:
  - fever or
  - new or worsening cough
  - or new or worsening shortness of breath

then you should go to your local emergency department. Wherever possible, phone them ahead of time to let them know that you are ill and your travel history and take a private vehicle if possible or an ambulance (if appropriate). Avoid taking public transit. Call public health's Health Connection line to alert us at 1-800-361-5653, but don't delay seeking care.

All travelers who have traveled to mainland China (but not Hubei province) should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days after returning. If any signs or symptoms develop (e.g. fever or cough or shortness of breath), go to your health care provider (ideally you should call your health care provider in advance to let them know and travel to them in a private vehicle).

Travelers that are **well** do NOT need to contact York Region Public Health.

### **I do not work in health care, do I need to wear a mask in public, school, or at work?**

Your workplace (and specifically health and wellness or occupational health and safety department) may have specific requirements or policies around mask use. However, for school, work, or other public settings (outside of health care) there is no need to wear a mask to protect against novel coronavirus if you are feeling well. Dr. Theresa Tam, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, actually cautions about the risks of wearing a mask. She advises that wearing masks when you're well is not an

effective measure. Sometimes it can actually present some risks, as you're putting your fingers up and down on your face, removing your mask and putting them next to your eyes.

Measures you can take that help against the spread of infections are the same as preventing against cold and flu, including:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, including between your fingers, under your fingernails and your wrists; if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your cough or sneeze using a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve, being sure to cover your mouth; put used tissue in the garbage and wash your hands after or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until your symptoms resolve
- Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing
- Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with saliva such as toothbrushes, eating utensils drinks/water bottles and towels

### **Will York Region Public Health be providing hand sanitizers or masks to health care providers in York Region?**

Health care providers are responsible for these supplies, Public Health will not be providing hand sanitizer or masks. Washing hands frequently and thoroughly using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is an important part of protecting against the spread of emerging diseases, the common cold, flu and other diseases commonly circulating at this time of year.

### **Who can I contact if I require further information?**

If you have additional questions, please contact Health Connection Monday to Sunday daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-361-5653 (1-866-512-6228 for the deaf or hard of hearing).

For medical advice, you may also contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential service you can call to get health advice or information. A Registered Nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For questions about workplace safety, please contact your own Occupational Health and Safety Department or the Ministry of Labour Health & Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008.

### **Where can I find out more about the novel coronavirus?**

Please visit [york.ca/coronavirus](http://york.ca/coronavirus) for the latest information from York Region Public Health or visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://Ontario.ca/coronavirus).