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Fifth case of coronavirus confirmed in Australia as 10 people are investigated

Health officials have confirmed that a fifth case of the deadly coronavirus has been diagnosed in Australia, in a 21-year-old Chinese student.



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Video

Image



A deadly new strain of coronavirus is putting global health authorities on high alert.

A fifth case of the deadly coronavirus has been confirmed in Australia, with a 21-year-old Chinese student diagnosed.

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The woman travelled on a direct flight from Wuhan to Sydney on January 22 and presented herself to hospital when she noticed symptoms.

The University of NSW confirmed the woman had been staying in student accommodation but had kept herself isolated.

“The student did not attend any classes at the university and stayed on her own in campus accommodation with no close contact before she was admitted to hospital,” a university spokeswoman said.

There are fears for another 10 people with six cases being investigated in NSW and four in Western Australia.

Four people in Queensland who were being tested have been given the all clear.

Officials are contacting four people in Queensland who had been on the same flight as a Victorian patient who tested positive.

NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said that the increased number of suspected cases was concerning.

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“But we will approach it in the same way that we have approached each of the other cases and make sure that each of the potential patients are in isolation,” he said.

WA chief health officer Andrew Robertson said all of the four adults being tested in the state met specific travel criteria.

“The risk to the Western Australian community remains low,” he said.

Providing an update after the fifth case was confirmed, Australia’s Chief Medical Officer Brendan Murphy said there was still no evidence of human-to-human transmission outside of China’s Hubei province.

“We have no evidence there’s a risk to the Australian public,” he said.

“There’s no human-to-human transmission that’s been identified in this country.”

Prof Murphy said he had convened with the Australian health protection principle committee, which had been looking at the data.

“I think the concern is the number of cases outside the Hubei province in China, and that’s why we are starting to look at people who have come from parts of China other than Hubei, as potentially as risk,” he said.

“The important thing is that everyone who comes from China is aware of the risk.”

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Authorities are now working to track down the people she has been in contact with.

Australian health authorities have warned more cases are likely to emerge in the coming days.

Three patients in NSW and one in Victoria have already been diagnosed with the virus following an outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

Three men aged 35, 43, and 53 are being treated in a Sydney hospital but have been listed as being stable.

All had been in contact with a confirmed case.

One person did not go to Wuhan but was a contact of a confirmed case in another province in China.

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A young female Chinese student is likely to be the fifth person in Australia to contract the deadly coronavirus, health authorities say. (Photo by Alain JOCARD / AFP) Source:AFP

In Victoria, a man in his 50s is being treated at Monash Medical Centre while four of his family members are being quarantined at home.

Prof Murphy said he had sent a letter to every GP in Australia, asking them to consider any recent arrival from Wuhan with flu-like symptoms a potential coronavirus case.

“They will probably turn out to be negative, but they should be treated that way, isolated and then referred to the nearest emergency department with calling ahead,” Dr Murphy told ABC TV today.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said there had been more than 380 calls to the consular emergency line, related to Australians in China but it was unclear how many there were.

“We’re treating this situation with the utmost seriousness,” she said.

“I absolutely understand the emotion and the concern that many Australians have about family members who are currently in this region in China. It is an extremely stressful experience for them.”

More than 2300 cases of coronavirus have been confirmed worldwide, most in China, while [80 people have died](#).

China’s National Health Commission says the incubation period for the virus can range from one-to-14 days, during which infection can occur.

CORONAVIRUS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

Coronavirus are a family of viruses that cause illnesses from the common cold to severe illnesses, typically they infect animals but a few affect humans like Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MER-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The coronavirus currently causing concern is known as 2019-nCoV. It is a new strain that has not previously been identified in humans.

WHY IS THE VIRUS CONCERNING HEALTH AUTHORITIES?

Some coronaviruses can have severe death tolls. The MER-coV virus has a fatality rate of 26 per cent, SARS had a fatality rate of 12 per cent. This compares to the fatality rate for the influenza virus of less than one per cent. To date the new 2019 nCoV coronavirus has killed nine people so it is so far not as severe as these more worrying coronaviruses.



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The symptoms could be as mild as a common cold but in severe cases it the virus can cause severe pneumonia, fever and shortness of breath.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The virus originated in the city of Wuhan in China the first cases were identified in people who travelled to local food markets and one theory is it was transmitted from animals to some of the humans who visited the market.

IS HUMAN TO HUMAN TRANSMISSION POSSIBLE?

Chinese health authorities have confirmed the virus is now being transmitted from human to human. A number of health workers in China contracted the virus from sick patients.

HOW CAN YOU CATCH IT?

The virus could be transmitted in droplets in the breath of infected people or could be transmitted if they leave traces of the virus on door handles or railings they have touched that are subsequently touched by others.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?

Wearing a face mask could help if the virus is transmitted through the air. Washing hands with soapy water regularly and using alcohol based hand disinfectants available in supermarkets can help prevent the spread.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE A COLD-LIKE VIRUS?

If you have been in contact with anyone who has recently travelled to China or an infected country who has been ill you should go to your doctor and get tested. Stay at home and don't use public transport to minimise spreading the infection.

IS THERE A TEST FOR THE VIRUS?

The US has developed a fast test for the virus and is in the process of sharing it with other countries. Results can be returned within a day.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

It could take between seven to 10 days after you are infected before symptoms of the virus emerge.

IS THERE A VACCINE?

Currently there is no vaccine but the National Institute of Health in the US is working on one. It could take months before it can be trialled.

Australia's Chief Medical Officer Brendan Murphy said the University of Queensland has government funding for epidemic preparedness and may be asked to help develop a vaccine.

It comes as Australian authorities are probing the possibility of repatriating more than 100 children from coronavirus-hit Wuhan.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt today said more than 100 young Australians are in Wuhan, which has been locked down by Chinese authorities. The government is working to extract those children from the city.

But Mr Hunt said the government would not yet suspend flights from China, nor screen every passenger on board.

"Every flight is being met by officials, and officials I'm advised, will be boarding the flights and ensuring each individual who has travelled on those flights is directly receiving information," Mr Hunt told the ABC. "We're working to make sure there's support for those (100) Australians and we are also working, as are other countries, to secure their ability to return."



Australian authorities are probing the possibility of repatriating more than 100 children from coronavirus-hit Wuhan.
(Photo by Hector RETAMAL / AFP) Source:AFP

Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne said closing Australia's borders due to coronavirus "would be a very significant step".

It needs to be established how Australians would be evacuated and whether they need to be quarantined upon their return, Ms Payne said.

"We don't have a definitive number on the number of Australians in Wuhan or in Hubei province because it will include a significant number of dual nationals, some of whom may not have travelled on Australian passports, they've travelled on Chinese passports for example," she told 3AW on Monday.



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