

What to know about the new coronavirus

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Image 1. Children wear masks at a train station in Hong Kong, January 22, 2020. A new coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. As of February 10, 2020, it had infected more than 40,000 people globally and resulted in more than 900 deaths. Photo: Kin Cheung/AP Photo

The world is facing a global health emergency. A new virus appeared in China. Viruses are small particles that can cause infection and disease.

The new virus is known as the 2019 novel Coronavirus. It is also called 2019-nCoV. As of February 10, the virus had infected more than 40,000 people around the world. The virus resulted in more than 900 deaths.

Here is what we know about 2019-nCoV.

What is 2019-nCoV?

There are many different types of coronaviruses. These viruses usually cause colds. But some coronaviruses cause deadly outbreaks.

The new coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, causes pneumonia. This is a type of lung infection. It can lead to death. This virus first showed up in Wuhan, China.

When did the outbreak start?

Chinese officials announced it on December 31, 2019. They told the World Health Organization (WHO) about the disease. WHO said it was a global health emergency.

Early reports tied the disease to a seafood market in Wuhan. The earliest known patient got sick on December 1. But he had not been exposed to the market. Researchers say the market was not the source of the first case. But people most likely infected each other at the market.



Where did the virus come from?

Coronaviruses come from wild animals. Sometimes, they leap to humans.

Research suggests that 2019-nCoV made the leap from animals to humans just once. Since then, it has been moving between people.

Can it infect pets?

There have been no reports of pets getting sick. However, some viruses infect pets.

The CDC is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC says that it is not likely that animals or pets in the United States can transmit the disease.

What are the symptoms of a 2019-nCoV infection?

People may develop a fever and cough. They may have trouble breathing. Some might get mildly sick. Others may develop pneumonia. The lungs can fill with fluid or mucus.

Symptoms appear between two and 14 days after you are exposed to the virus. People might be contagious even if they do not look sick. It might take five days for a person to look sick.

How infectious is the virus?

Researchers do not yet know. This virus has never infected humans before last year. So, people are not yet resistant to it. It is likely that anybody can get infected.

How long does it stay on surfaces?

Researchers are not sure yet. Coronaviruses usually survive on a surface for only a few hours. They think it is the same with this new virus, too.

How does it spread?

The virus spreads from person to person. Drops from an infected person's cough or sneeze can carry the virus to someone new.

How far has 2019-nCoV spread?

Most of the people sick with the new virus are in China. As of February 7, 27 other countries have reported cases. Many of these patients had just returned from China.

How deadly is the disease?

The coronaviruses that cause colds are mild. They affect the sinuses and throat.

But 2019-nCoV can be more serious. It can cause respiratory distress syndrome. This is a condition that affects the lungs. It can limit the blood from getting enough oxygen. This can be deadly. Out of every 100 people infected by the virus, four might die.

What is the situation in the U.S.?

As of February 4, health officials had confirmed coronavirus in 11 people. Two people had been infected by someone else in the U.S. Twenty U.S. airports are checking travelers from China for symptoms.

What are the best ways to protect yourself?

There is no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV. There is no drug to treat it, either. But you can do things to limit your chances of getting infected. It is similar to how you prevent the cold or flu.

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth.