

February 24th, 2019

Travel advisory

The Ministry of Health is raising the travel advisory alert from level 1 (Practice Usual Precautions) to level II for South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Italy.

Risk level(s): II- Practice Enhanced Precautions

Exercise a high degree of caution in South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Italy (specifically Northern Italy) due to the increase of COVID-19 (Wuhan novel coronavirus) cases.

Summary Points

- There has been an increase in COVID-19 (Wuhan novel coronavirus) cases in these countries.
- The virus can spread from human to human and is very transmissible at short distances.
- The illness can range from mild to severe, with elderly persons and those with pre-existing conditions being more vulnerable to severe illness or death.
- Travelers to these locations should avoid the outbreak areas and contact with sick people.
- Travelers should also frequently clean their hands by washing with soap and water for approximately 20 seconds or using a 70%-95% alcohol based sanitizer.

Current Situation Overview

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), first isolated in Wuhan, China has been detected in a number of other locations around the world. Many cases have been associated with travel to or from mainland China or close contact with a travel-related case, but multiple instances of community spread have been reported in Italy and Japan. Community spread is concerning, as it means that how or where cases were infected is not known.

Research shows that illness with this virus ranges from mild to severe. Signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, difficulty breathing and muscle pain. Sore throat and diarrhea has been reported in some patients, some without other symptoms.

Please be aware that COVID-19 has caused severe disease and death in patients who developed pneumonia.

Risk factors for severe illness are not yet clear, but elderly patients and those with pre-existing conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness and death.

How to protect yourself and others

If you do travel to these countries:

1. **Avoid areas with outbreaks.** Follow directives issued by the National Health Authority and/or the World Health Organization.

2. **Know how it spreads!**

- The virus can spread through person to person contact and indirectly through contaminated surfaces.
 - So avoid direct contact with people that are visibly sick.
 - Avoid contact with blood and other bodily fluids especially of a person you think is sick.

3. Avoid:

- close contact with or handling of animals.
- live or dead animals, as both may spread the virus.
- animal or fresh meat markets and handling or eating raw or undercooked meat.

4. Practice **strict and frequent hand washing routines** with soap and water for 20 seconds.

5. Know the symptoms of the novel coronavirus COVID-19!

- Seek medical care if you develop flu like symptoms: fever, headache, fatigue, severe and nonproductive cough, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, or any other severe symptoms.

6. Symptoms may start between 2- 14 days after exposure to the virus.

- Monitor your health and that of your traveling partners.

What to do if sick

If you spent time in South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Italy and become sick within 14 days please:

- Seek medical advice. Call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room and inform them about your recent travel to an area with coronavirus transmission, and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Do not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean your hands by washing them with soap and water for 20 seconds or approximately 20 seconds or using a 70%-95% alcohol based sanitizer.