



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
SINGAPORE

MH 34:24/8

6 Feb 2020

All registered dental practitioners

**MOH CIRCULAR 31/2020**

**2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)**

The Ministry of Health has confirmed imported cases of 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection in Singapore since 23 January 2020 and the Government has stepped up our safeguards accordingly. **As the 2019-nCoV situation in China continues to evolve, MOH advises travellers to defer all non-essential travel to Mainland China.**

**SUSPECT CASE DEFINITION**

2. The definition of a suspect case is as follows:

- a) A person with clinical signs and symptoms suggestive of pneumonia or severe respiratory infection with breathlessness **AND** travel to mainland China within 14 days before onset of illness; or
- b) A person with an acute respiratory illness of any degree of severity who, within 14 days before onset of illness had:
  - i. Been to Hubei Province (including Wuhan city) or **Zhejiang Province (including Hangzhou city)**, China; **OR**
  - ii. Been to a hospital in mainland China; **OR**
  - iii. Had close contact<sup>1</sup> with a case of 2019 novel coronavirus infection; **OR**
  - iv. **Had frequent or close contact during work**<sup>2</sup> **with recent travellers from mainland China (travel history in the last 14 days).**

3. In reference to Paragraph 2, please note that:

- (a) **Transit only** in an airport located in mainland China is **not** considered as having travelled to mainland China.

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<sup>1</sup> Close contact is defined as:

- Anyone who provided care for the patient, including a health care worker or family member, or who had other similarly close physical contact;
- Anyone who stayed (e.g. household members) at the same place as a case.

<sup>2</sup> Persons who attended business meetings/discussions, frontline staff in hospitality and tourism (e.g. hotels, shops, tours) with regular dealings with travellers from mainland China.



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- (b) **Frequent or close contact during work with recent travellers from Mainland China** refers to persons who had close daily interactions with large groups of travellers (i.e. more than 10 individuals) from Mainland China (with travel history in the last 14 days). Please refer to **Annex A**, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Q10 and Q11 for more details.

4. Dental practitioners are reminded to advise the public to exercise social responsibility, observe good personal hygiene and seek medical care early if unwell. It is necessary to adopt protective measures for all dental personnel, and to implement and to enforce infection control measures in order to reduce the risk of viral contamination.

5. Suspect cases whose conditions are medically stable should be referred to the **nearest General Practitioner (GP) for further evaluation immediately.**

6. Please call the SCDF (995) ambulance if the patient is medically unstable (i.e. hypotensive or breathless). Please inform the ambulance operator that you are referring a 2019-nCoV suspect case.

#### **MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE RETURNED FROM MAINLAND CHINA**

7. As a precautionary measure to protect the community, all staff and volunteers returning to Singapore from Mainland China should be asked to take a **Leave of Absence (LOA)** from work and monitored closely for any fever or respiratory symptoms for at least 14 days after returning from China. Please refer to **Annex A**, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Q5 for more details.

8. Any staff and volunteers who fall ill should be promptly asked to see a GP for evaluation.

9. Your continued vigilance against possible cases of 2019-nCoV is greatly appreciated. For clarification on this circular, please email [MOH\\_INFO@moh.gov.sg](mailto:MOH_INFO@moh.gov.sg).

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## ANNEX A

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)

#### 1. What is the cause of the pneumonia cluster in Wuhan city?

To date, the source of infection, and mode of transmission remain uncertain. However, the etiological agent has been determined to be a novel coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The source of infection and mode of transmission remains unknown although there has been human-to-human transmission, including a cluster involving healthcare workers.

#### 2. What are the signs and symptoms of 2019-nCoV infection?

People infected with 2019-nCoV were reported to typically experience fever, cough and pneumonia.

#### 3. Is there any vaccine or treatment for 2019-nCoV infection?

No vaccine or specific treatment for 2019-nCoV infection is currently available. Treatment is supportive and based on the patient's clinical condition.

#### 4. What advice can I give to patients who are travelling to countries where cases of 2019-nCoV are being reported?

You should advise patients to:

- Avoid contact with live animals including poultry and birds, and consumption of raw and undercooked meats;
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of illness;
- Observe good personal hygiene;
- Practice frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing);
- Wear a mask if experiencing respiratory symptoms such as a cough or runny nose;
- Cover his/her mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin immediately; and
- Seek medical attention promptly if feeling unwell.

#### 5. Should staff and volunteers returning from China be quarantined?

As a precautionary measure to protect the community, all staff and volunteers who have returned to Singapore from Mainland China should inform their institutions of their travel history and will be required to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) for 14 days upon their return. (Refer to Figure 1 for worked example.)

This applies to all staff and volunteers in sectors where there is close and sustained contact with vulnerable populations – namely, preschool and education, healthcare and eldercare – and are returning from Mainland China from 28 January 2020, as well as those who returned in the last 14 days. Employers should grant the LOA as paid leave, over and above the staff's annual leave entitlement.

In addition, they should monitor their health closely, and see a doctor promptly if they are unwell and inform their doctor of their travel history. If they have a fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath), they should wear a mask and call the clinic ahead of the visit.

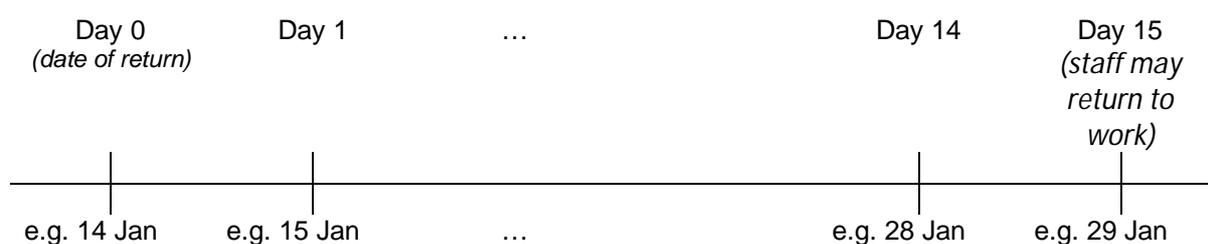


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Staff and volunteers may return to work after they have cleared the 14 day LOA and they have not developed any symptoms.

With effect from 31 January 2020 6pm, Residents (Singaporean Citizens/ PRs) and Long-term pass holders (including Work Passes and Permits, Student Pass, Dependent Pass and Long-term Visit Pass) with recent travel history to mainland China within the last 14 days are to be placed on a 14-day leave of absence from the day of their return to Singapore from mainland China. The leave of absence does not apply retrospectively to people who returned to Singapore from mainland China before 31 January 2020 6pm. Previously announced quarantine requirements for returning residents and long-term pass holders with travel history to Hubei, or with PRC passports issued in Hubei, remain in effect. A MOH health advisory for persons placed on leave of absence is updated on 01 February 2020, and can be accessed via MOH Website: <https://www.moh.gov.sg>.

Figure 1: Worked Example for Leave of Absence



## 6. What infection control practices should I adopt?

As part of infection control, clinics should routinely screen patients for fever and travel history. Patients with respiratory symptoms or fever should be asked to don a surgical mask. Suspect patients should be placed in a separate area where possible.

As part of routine clinical care for all other patients, dental practitioners are advised to practice standard precautions and good hand hygiene.

Cleaning of premises should be carried out regularly:

- Use of 70% alcohol
- Do not spray cleansing agents as it may aerosolise infective agents
- Cleansing agent should be applied using a damp cloth, left for at least 10 minutes but no longer than 30 minutes, thoroughly rinsed off and the area dried

## 7. What should a dental practitioner do if he/she refers a suspect case to a General Practitioner? Does he need to quarantine himself?

There is no need to quarantine himself/herself. MOH will initiate contact tracing if case is positive and will follow up with clinic on further measures.

## 8. Can patients be encouraged to call the hotline for ambulance if they suspect they have symptoms instead of going to the GP clinics and infecting others in the process?

Patients are advised to visit a doctor at any medical clinic to be assessed. Patients should seek medical treatment at the ED only for serious, urgent and life-threatening emergencies.



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**9. Where can I get the latest information on 2019-nCoV?**

You may refer to MOH's website (<https://www.moh.gov.sg/2019-ncov-wuhan>) for the latest information on 2019-nCoV.

**10. What are some of the examples of “frequent or close contact during work with recent travellers from Mainland China”?**

Persons who are considered to have had frequent or close contact include individuals who work at shops, restaurants or hotels, which are frequented by large tour groups (i.e. more than 10 individuals) from Mainland China.

These persons would not be considered to have had frequent or close contact:

- Individuals who work at shops, restaurants and hotels, which are occasionally visited by travellers from Mainland China
- Taxi drivers or private car hires with passengers who are travellers from Mainland China
- Visitors to tourist sites frequented by travellers from Mainland China
- Individuals with household members who had travelled Mainland China etc.

**11. China had suspended overseas group tours from mainland China. Why would we expect such tour groups in Singapore and why would there be such interactions?**

China had ordered all travel agencies to stop the sales of domestic and international tours as part of the efforts to contain the spread of 2019-nCoV in end January; and from 1 February 2020, all new visitors with recent travel history to mainland China (within the last 14 days) have not been allowed in Singapore.

We could expect the volume of recent travellers from Mainland China to decrease significantly following these time periods.



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