



Memo

Health Alert Update #7 COVID-19 - Outbreak of novel coronavirus Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China

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Latest developments

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) now that the 2019 Coronavirus has spread to multiple countries.

There are currently **over 75,000 cases** confirmed cases worldwide with over 2000 deaths. All but approximately 750 cases and 5 deaths have occurred in China.

The 5 deaths outside mainland China took place in Hong Kong. The Philippines, France, Taiwan and Japan. Over 400 of the non-China cases are in Japan and the great majority are associated with the quarantined Diamond Princess cruise ship.

AXA Partners and many governments advise that travelers defer all non-essential travel to mainland China. AXA Partners advises travellers to check with their government before they make travel arrangements.

China has announced a decrease in development of new cases. However, the China health authorities recently changed the definition of “confirmed cases” making it difficult to determine the trend of the outbreak. Outside of China, sustained community transmission of the virus has not been established in any other country.

Many governments will now impose 14 days of home isolation on any asymptomatic travellers returning from China (several include Hong Kong and Macau). The UK has expanded recommended screening of persons with illness symptoms to travellers returning from multiple Asian locations. They have announced expanded authority to enforce quarantine on individuals who have had possible exposure.



Ongoing situation

- **AXA Partners continues full operations from its contact centers. It has fully prepared continuity plans to ensure the health of its employees and their availability to serve its customers and clients. No interruption of service is anticipated.**
- Chinese authorities maintain the quarantine on the city of Wuhan and many nearby cities with complete travel restriction. Flights and rail travel have been cancelled to and from these locations. Many large public functions throughout China have been cancelled. Two temporary hospitals have been constructed to handle the overload of patients.
- Many international flights to and from China and several to Hong Kong have been cancelled.
- Hong Kong has declared a state of emergency, cancelling all air and rail travel from Wuhan and closing schools and universities until February 17. Many businesses and factories in China will remain closed for extended periods.
- Singapore as the travel hub for the Asian region, raised the Disease Outbreak Response System Condition (DORSCON) to Orange, prompting additional precautionary measures. There are increasing advisories from various countries with regards to traveling or transiting through Singapore.
- Extensive restriction on travellers returning from mainland China have been imposed in many countries, some of whom will quarantine or restrict such passengers for up to 14 days.
- The WHO remains vigilant regarding the potential further spread of COVID internationally, though it does not consider that there is sustained community transmission in any country outside China.

Ongoing Travel Situation

- International airports with flights from China are extensively screening passengers arriving from Wuhan area and China or who may have transited through China. Infrared temperature sensors are used to detect fever and direct examination may be performed.
- Passengers should expect to be detained if they have concerning symptoms or fever, especially with a history of travel to China or contact with others with travel to an affected area.
- Wuhan and several cities in Hubei province are under complete quarantine with complete ban on passage in or out by any means
- Several governments have arranged for transportation of its nationals from Wuhan. Foreign nationals are advised to contact their Embassy for assistance leaving the quarantined areas, but this cannot be guaranteed.



- Many countries receiving passengers from Wuhan and China are imposing a period of isolation and monitoring before allowing asymptomatic travellers to circulate normally.
 - ✓ The US will not allow entry of most foreign nationals with a history of travel to or through China 14 days prior to arrival in the United States
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/Presidential-Proclamation-Coronavirus.html#ExternalPopup>).
 - ✓ US Citizens returning from China will be screened and may be quarantined for 14 days in a separate facility.
- AXA Partners advises that all non-essential travel to mainland China be deferred. Many flights to affected areas have been cancelled and travellers should expect difficulty booking seats to depart.
- If you display symptoms of viral illness while in China, expect to be detained and possibly quarantined until you have tested negative for Coronavirus.
- If you have travel plans, maintain contact with your travel advisor as the authorities may impose travel restrictions which may result in flight cancellations, delays or entry to intended destinations. For AXA travelers, please refer to the Travelers Recommendations information sheet available on ONE, AXA Partners Edition.

Clinical information and Recommendations Reminder

- It is now recognized the virus can be transmitted from human-to-human, mainly through respiratory droplets that may land on surfaces or other people. It is not clear that wearing masks in general is helpful (they are most important for healthcare workers and those in intimate contact with infected persons). However, some health authorities in certain locations are advocating wearing masks. Please check with your local authority
- Virus is absorbed through mucous membranes (not normal skin) - mainly mouth, nose and eyes. It is important to avoid touching those areas with your hands, especially when they have not recently been washed.
- There is a diagnostic test that can confirm or rule out the Coronavirus as the cause of symptoms. Results may take up to 48 hours. The test has not been available in many private hospitals. Symptomatic patients are usually referred to a public facility for testing. Authorities are working on distributing testing materials to local hospitals for more rapid results.
- The main symptoms of the disease include fever, cough and, in the most severe cases, shortness of breath. However, increasingly it is recognized that many patients may have a minor illness with symptoms typical of upper respiratory infection (head congestion, runny nose, diarrhea and/or vomiting) making the illness difficult to distinguish from other common viral illnesses. Severe complications typically start after several days following initial symptoms.
- The case fatality rate is low, approximately 2%; severe illness develops in the minority of cases, mainly in elderly persons and those with co-morbid conditions. The majority of confirmed cases have not been life-threatening.
- Though the degree of infectivity and incubation period have not been established, authorities assume it can take up to 14 days before symptoms appear after exposure. It is also unknown how long a patient remains contagious after symptoms resolve.
- There is no specific treatment for the illness aside from supportive care.



- All patients requiring hospitalization will be placed in protective isolation for the duration of treatment and patients with mild illness will be expected to be monitored and in isolation at home.
- The currently recommended isolation period during observation for development of symptoms is 14 days.

Recommendations

- **Please refer to the above recommendations related to travel involving China.**
- **Avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms and ensure all animal products are well cooked.**
- **Avoid attending crowded events and public venues in China.**
- **Patients with symptoms of cough, shortness of breath and/or fever, or other symptoms of a viral illness, especially with a history of travel to Hubei Province are advised to seek immediate medical attention.**
- ***If your contact or travel history would place you at higher risk of being infected with COVID it is essential to advise the health facility you intend to visit to expect you. Announce your concerns at the entrance so that staff can screen you and put you in a safe location.***
- **Use stringent hygiene practices:**
 - ✓ **Wash hands frequently using with soap and water and use alcohol based disinfectant gels liberally.**
 - ✓ **Clean surfaces (including desks, computers and telephones) regularly with disinfectants.**
 - ✓ **Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and face with your hands.**
 - ✓ **In China, avoid crowded places and events.**
 - ✓ **Avoid proximity to others who are coughing, sneezing or have a fever.**
 - ✓ **If you have symptoms (coughing or sneezing), put on a surgical mask to avoid contaminating other people and cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash your hands. Note that once you have coughed into your clothing, it is considered contaminated.**
 - ✓ **Report any symptoms to your manager at work before reporting for duty.**
 - ✓ **Consult your workplace manager regarding any additional measures advised by your employer.**
- Health care facilities are to take isolation precautions on any patients with the above symptoms and who have traveled from the source of the outbreak in China.
- Be prepared to be screened in airports, especially where flights are arriving from Wuhan and other points in China

References: <https://www.who.int/csr/don/en/>
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>