# Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for Australian travellers



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## What is coronavirus?

[Coronaviruses](#) (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause a range of illnesses from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Initial human infections of this new, or 'novel' coronavirus were first notified to the World Health Organization (WHO) in late December 2019 after a cluster of pneumonia cases emerged in Hubei Province, China. On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Since it's a new virus, much remains unknown about the characteristics of the coronavirus. However, a large number of countries have now confirmed sustained or limited person-to-person transmission. On 11 February 2020, the WHO named the disease caused by the novel coronavirus 'COVID-19'.

Common symptoms of the disease include a fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, and shortness of breath. While around 80 per cent of cases will only experience mild symptoms, severe cases can cause pneumonia, and even death.

More COVID-19 information, fact sheets and resources for the public, health professionals and industry are available from the [Department of Health.](#)

# What we recommend

## Should I take my planned trip to....?

Particularly if you're elderly or have an underlying health condition, you should carefully consider your travel plans and consult your doctor before travelling.

All travellers should consider what medical services or support you'd have available if you contracted COVID-19 overseas, or had to undergo a quarantine period in the country you're headed to.  Be prepared for delays and disruption, including taking into account what this might mean for your health, and your family, work or study responsibilities. Every traveller is different, and will have different reasons for travelling, health conditions and risk appetite.

To inform your decision about whether to travel, and to be prepared if you do:

- read and subscribe to our travel advice for your destination, as well as any transit points;
- check in with your travel insurance provider to confirm what your insurance may cover if your travel is disrupted due to COVID-19;
- call your airline or travel agent to ask how COVID-19 may affect your bookings; and
- visit your doctor for advice if you are elderly, travelling with children or have underlying health issues.

**More information:**

- Coronavirus (Department of Health)
- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak (World Health Organization)

# While you're away

## Health

To minimise your risk of exposure:

- practise good hygiene to protect yourself against infections. Good hygiene includes:
    - wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
    - cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
    - avoiding close contact with others, particularly if they are unwell
- monitor your health closely. If you develop symptoms while travelling (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath), arrange to see a doctor for an urgent assessment
    - you should isolate yourself to avoid any risk of spreading the virus until you can be tested
- follow the advice of local authorities
- you don't need to wear a face mask if you're well. Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who are infected with coronavirus from spreading it to others. However, if you are travelling in a country whose health authorities ask people to wear a mask in public spaces, you should do so.

More information:

- Infectious diseases

## Transport – entry, exit and transit

Many countries have stricter entry and exit measures in response to COVID-19.  These can change at short notice and without warning.  You may not be allowed to enter or transit, or you may be quarantined, based on your previous travel history and symptoms.  Some countries have designated Australia as a moderate-risk country, and may impose restrictions or deny entry to travellers from Australia altogether.

You should contact your travel agent, accommodation and transportation providers about any potential changes in services or entry requirements for your destinations. Check with your travel insurance company about how your specific policy covers the situation.

Contact the nearest [embassy or consulate](#) of the countries you are visiting before you travel if you have any queries about their entry or exit requirements.

# Going on a cruise?

Australians, particularly those with underlying health concerns, should reconsider taking an overseas cruise at this time due to COVID-19. If in doubt, consult a medical professional before travelling.

Disruptions to cruise ship itineraries due to COVID-19 can have significant consequences for travellers. The situation is fluid and you can expect further disruptions.

If you do proceed with your cruise, check with your travel agent or cruise company for any additional health measures in place, and subscribe to our travel advisories for your destinations and transit locations.

More information:

- [Coronavirus and international cruises](#)

# Coming home

## Returning from overseas

Australia has in place border, isolation, surveillance and case tracing mechanisms to protect the Australian community.  We also have well-established mechanisms to respond to ill travellers at points of entry.  Expect additional health measures in place as you return.  [The Department of Home Affairs](#) has further information on changes to entry requirements.

## If you feel unwell

If you develop symptoms within 14 days of returning to Australia, seek and follow medical advice. Stay at home to prevent potentially spreading the virus to others. If you need to see a doctor, call the clinic or hospital before you arrive to advise them of your symptoms and travel history.  The doctor will make an assessment, and may arrange to test you for coronavirus. Follow the latest advice on the [Department of Health website](#).

Airlines must report passengers on board showing signs of an infectious disease, including fever, sweats or chills. Unwell travellers are met on arrival by biosecurity officers, who'll make an assessment and take necessary actions, such as asking you to self-isolate or referring you to hospital, where required.

## Returning to Australia from a high-risk country

- Foreign nationals who have been in or transited through mainland China, Iran, Italy and Korea will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left that country.
- Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family, and airline crews can enter Australia from these countries - but you'll need to isolate yourself at home for 14 days from the date you left the affected country.
- If you've been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you must also isolate yourself for 14 days after your last contact with the confirmed case

**More information:**

- [Immigration restrictions](#) (Dept of Home Affairs)
- [Department of Health](#)

**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**