

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What you need to know

While we are still learning more about this new virus, **the risk of a widespread community outbreak in New Zealand remains low if we continue to be vigilant.**

How worried should I be?

- Your chances of catching the COVID-19 virus in New Zealand are very low.
- It is highly unlikely you will catch the virus walking down the street
- COVID-19 appears to be as infectious as the flu and the symptoms are similar: fever, cough and difficulty breathing. You are only likely to catch it if you are near to someone with the virus. Most people catch the virus from someone at home.
- People will not be moving around the community if they are suspected or confirmed of having the virus – they will be in isolation. Their family and anyone they may have infected will also be asked to stay at home.

How serious is coronavirus?

- Most people have a mild to moderate illness with flu-like symptoms
- People of all ages are being infected, but older people and those with medical conditions seem most likely to get seriously ill.

How do I protect myself and my family?

Everyone should protect themselves from the virus, as you would for the 'flu:

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly (for at least 20 seconds), using soap and water. This is the best way to avoid this illness. Use hand sanitiser if you don't have soap and water.
- As with other illnesses, if you are sick, do not go to work or school, or see visitors.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or clothing. Dispose of tissues in the bin and wash hands afterwards.
- Avoid being near to people who are sick.
- Washing your hands often and covering coughs and sneezes will do more to protect you from the virus than a mask. Wearing a mask offers minimal protection to people who are not sick.
- If you are sharing food, use utensils to serve the food and keep your personal spoon, fork, or chopsticks separate to avoid transmission through saliva.



What should I do if I think I could have Covid-19?

- If you start to experience mild symptoms, then stay at home and call the dedicated, national coronavirus line for advice: **0800 358 5453**. Interpreters are available on request and it operates 24 hours, seven days.
- If you start to experience **more serious symptoms** arrange to see a doctor urgently. Call ahead, don't just turn up. Difficulty breathing requires immediate medical attention and can be a sign of pneumonia. Call **111** for an ambulance.

Where can I find more information?

Information is updated regularly on the [Ministry of Health website](#)

