

January 23, 2020



Dear Colleagues,

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) is providing this update regarding the recently reported novel coronavirus outbreak in China. TDH reminds healthcare providers to routinely ask patients about recent (over the last month) travel history at points of triage and patient assessment, and communicate relevant findings to infection control staff, public health officials, and treating clinicians.

In December 2019, an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown etiology was detected in Wuhan City (Hubei Province), China. To date, Chinese health authorities have confirmed more than 500 infections with a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Confirmed cases have been identified in travelers from Wuhan City in Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Seattle, Washington. Most patients identified early in the outbreak had epidemiological links to a seafood and animal market in Wuhan City. There is evidence that supports human-to-human transmission. To date, over 90% of confirmed cases have an epidemiologic link to Wuhan City, China.

CDC will provide updated [information](#) as this outbreak evolves. TDH requests that medical providers ask about travel history in patients with fever or lower respiratory symptoms. If these symptoms are identified in a patient who traveled to Wuhan City or had close contact with either a confirmed 2019-nCoV patient or patient under investigation in the 14 days prior to symptom onset, contact TDH immediately (615-741-7247) for consultation and possible laboratory testing. As a reminder, TDH maintains an [interactive resource portal](#) tracking current global disease threats, with important TDH and CDC guidance, clinical algorithms, and CDC's latest travel warning/advisory.

Healthcare institutions should review infection control procedures. CDC has released [infection control guidance](#). Early identification of suspect patients will minimize unprotected exposures at points of triage. In the event symptomatic patients with relevant travel history or exposures are identified, suspect patients should be:

- Asked to wear a surgical mask
- Evaluated in a private room (ideally an airborne infection isolation room) with the door closed
- Healthcare personnel entering the room should use standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions, and eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield)

TDH staff will consult with providers and CDC to determine if patients meet criteria for 2019-nCoV laboratory testing. At this time, diagnostic testing for 2019-nCoV can be conducted only at CDC. To increase the likelihood of detecting infection, CDC recommends collection of three specimen types: lower respiratory, upper respiratory and serum specimens. Full [guidance for specimen collection](#) is available. Of note, many commercially available Respiratory Viral Panels in the United States include PCR testing for seasonal coronaviruses (i.e. coronavirus 229E, HKU1, NL63, and OC43). These types of coronavirus are common, and are not reportable to TDH. There are currently no commercially available laboratory tests for this novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Up-to-date information can be found through the CDC's [website](#).

Thank you for all that you do in keeping Tennesseans safe and healthy.