

1st Case of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the United States

The CDC and the State of Washington Department of Health in coordination with the Snohomish Health District posted news releases of the first U.S. case of the novel coronavirus that was first identified in Wuhan, China and was reported to the WHO on December 31, 2019. Most cases were initially associated with a Wuhan Seafood and Animal (dead & alive) Market. Many of the initial cases were vendors at that market, but there has also been limited human to human spread. Since then, there has been spread to other areas of China, as well as exported travel cases from Wuhan to Thailand, Japan, Korea, and now the United States, all with just one known case except Thailand, which has two. In China, at least 14 health care workers have also developed the novel virus, indicating true person to person transmission is occurring. The CDC began implementing screening for the virus (looking for fever and respiratory symptoms) at 3 airports with indirect and direct flights from Wuhan, San Francisco, L.A. (LAX), and JFK, New York; two more airports will begin screening, Atlanta and Chicago O'Hare.

The patient, who was traveling from Wuhan, was not symptomatic until a couple of days after he arrived in Washington. When he began to have symptoms, he visited his physician and told him about his travel. The health care team suspected the virus, and arranged for a test to be overnighted to the CDC. In the meantime, he was transported in a special EMS unit to an area hospital, where he is receiving care and is reportedly doing well, but is quarantined. He did not visit any animal markets or have contact with anyone sick during his stay in China. A CDC team is working with Snohomish Health District and the Washington State Dept of Health to identify all of his contacts, including those on the plane. The CDC has also activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to provide better support for anything related to the 2019nCoV outbreak. Although all this has been put in place and person to person spread is occurring, the CDC and WHO still believe the risk to the US and other countries is low. Early in the outbreak, the WHO and CDC posted information for health care providers on how to identify and manage anyone meeting the case definition. The Washington case was exactly how it was supposed to work.

Most cases of 2019-nCoV have mild cases with fever and cough, some develop more respiratory symptoms including difficulty breathing or shortness of breath (SOB) but ultimately improve. A few develop severe symptoms, need ventilator support and six have died. X-rays show a bilateral pneumonia. Coronaviruses are usually found in animals (zoonotic) but some have found their way to infecting humans, usually by way of initial contact with the animals, until varying degrees of human to human transmission occurs. SARS and MERS-CoV are two recent human transmission viruses; SARS made the human to human jump more efficiently, while many MERS-CoV cases are still initiated by contact with animals or their products, particularly camels (although it is not thought to be the original animal crossover). Coronaviruses can be found in bats, cats, and camels. Some common colds in humans are caused by coronaviruses. SARS, MERS, and 2019-nCoV are the exceptions.

CDC Press Release on First US Case of 2019-nCoV (imported from China):
<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0121-novel-coronavirus-travel-case.html>

Washington State Dept of Health/Snohomish Health District News Release on First US Case:
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Newsroom/Articles/ID/1068/Case-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-confirmed-in-Washington-state-resident>

CDC Situation Update Summary (1/21/20):
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>

CDC Travel Notice Raised to an Alert after First US Patient:
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/novel-coronavirus-china>

CIDRAP News Article on US First Novel Coronavirus Case in US Traveler:
<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/01/us-detects-first-novel-coronavirus-case-traveler>

CDC Types of Coronaviruses:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/types.html>

CDC Human Coronaviruses
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/about/index.html>