



MEDIA LINES

Pneumonia of unknown cause – Wuhan, Central Hubei, China

Issue Statement:

On December 31, 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in the Hubei province in China issued a public statement that they have identified cases of pneumonia of unknown cause associated with a local live seafood market.

Chinese authorities report that there is no evidence of person-to-person spread at this time. The local live seafood market has been closed and a full investigation, including laboratory testing, of these cases is underway to identify the cause of the illness.

While the cause of the illnesses in Wuhan, China is still under investigation, SARS, avian and human influenza viruses, MERS-CoV, adenovirus and common respiratory pathogens have been ruled out. Pathogen identification and tracing of the cause is ongoing.

The World Health Organization is actively monitoring the situation and issued updated information on the outbreak, a risk assessment and advice on public health measures and surveillance. The WHO notes it does not recommend travel measures or restrictions.

PHAC has updated the China travel page on travel.gc.ca to include a travel health notice.

Key Messages:

- The Public Health Agency of Canada is monitoring the situation regarding a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China.
- The risk to Canada and to Canadians is low.
- Canadians travelling abroad are encouraged to consult the Travel Health Notice (<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/china>) for China on travel.gc.ca.
- The Government of Canada and provinces and territories have multiple systems in place to identify, prevent and control the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is actively monitoring the situation and working with global and domestic partners. Canada's Chief Public Health Officer of Canada is in close contact with provincial and territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health to share information as it becomes available.

Global Health Security

- Today, more than ever, public health risks in one part of the world can threaten the health of people worldwide.



- In an increasingly globalized world, stopping the spread of infectious diseases requires strong international collaboration.
- The Government of Canada is prepared to respond to public health emergencies and takes precautions to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases into and out of Canada.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada works closely with international partners to detect emerging infectious diseases through early alerting and reporting systems.
- Through the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations, the Public Health Agency of Canada collaborates with global partners to share information within hours of the identification of a public health threat.

If asked if any Canadians have been impacted:

- Currently, there are no suspected cases in Canada and we are not aware of any cases involving Canadians overseas.

If asked about advice for travellers:

- The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued a Travel Health Notice (<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/china>) for individuals travelling to Wuhan, China.
- The Travel Health Notice recommends that travellers avoid:
 - high-risk areas such as farms, live animal markets, and areas where animals may be slaughtered;
 - contact with animals (alive or dead), including pigs, chickens, ducks and wild birds; and
 - surfaces with animal droppings or secretions on them.
- The Travel Health Notice also reminds travellers to follow usual health precautions such as washing their hands often and practising proper cough and sneeze etiquette.
- No matter where Canadians plan to travel, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that they consult www.travel.gc.ca, which is the Government of Canada's official source of destination-specific travel information. It provides important advice to help travellers make informed decisions and travel safely while abroad.
- Canadians should always tell their health care providers about their travel if they become ill after returning to Canada.

If asked about border measures:

- At this point, there is no evidence to support any additional border measures.



Questions and Answers:

Q1. Would Canada close its borders to prevent spread of this pneumonia into Canada?

- No, at this time (January 7, 2020) there is no evidence to support implementing additional border measures. China is taking appropriate actions to identify, diagnose and contain the situation, including:
 - China National Health Commission has sent an expert team to Wuhan;
 - China Centre for Disease Control is conducting a field investigation;
 - Laboratory testing is underway for respiratory pathogens;
 - All cases are undergoing treatment and close contacts of the cases are being tracked; and
 - The implicated exposure site (Hua Nan Seafood Wholesale Market) has been closed.
- The World Health Organization has been engaged and is actively monitoring the situation. The World Health Organization advises against the application of any travel restrictions at this time.

Q2. How does Canada prevent the spread of infectious diseases?

- The Government of Canada and the provinces and territories have multiple systems in place to identify, prevent and control the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.
- These include a global public health intelligence monitoring system which scans the world's open source media, strong partnerships and collaboration internationally, and information sharing across the public health system in Canada.
- Canada's public health laboratory system is well-equipped to detect serious infectious diseases.

BACKGROUND:

- Canada has a robust system to address health issues at our borders.
- The Public Health Agency administers the *Quarantine Act* to screen and assess travellers for signs of communicable diseases at international points of entry. The *Quarantine Act* is administered 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, at all points of entry into Canada



- The *Quarantine Act* requires travellers to report to a Canada Borders Services Agency agent if they are ill upon arrival. As well, airlines and airport authorities are required to report ill travellers arriving on international flights to the Public Health Agency of Canada's Central Notification System, which is administered by quarantine officers who have the authority to implement public health measures under the *Quarantine Act*.
- Together with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Public Health Agency of Canada helps to reduce the spread of serious communicable diseases and informs travellers at points of entry of actions they should take if they begin to experience symptoms of illness.