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## Ohio Department of Health classifies 2019-novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) immediately reportable disease

*No cases have been reported in Ohio and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says the risk to the American public is low.*

COLUMBUS — Amy Acton, MD, MPH, Director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), declared novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), an immediately reportable disease.

By issuing a [Director's Journal Entry](#), Dr. Acton elevated 2019-nCoV to a Class A disease. This is a proactive step to ensure appropriate reporting of suspected cases, should the need arise in Ohio. No cases have been reported in Ohio to date. However, one case has been reported in Washington state and this step helps reinforce Ohio's ongoing preparedness work.

The Ohio Department of Health has been closely monitoring developments related to 2019-nCoV in tandem with the Centers for Disease Control. 2019-nCoV is considered a low risk to the American public, according to the [CDC](#).

Classifying a disease as Class A means that confirmed or suspected cases of 2019-nCoV must be reported immediately to the local health district where the person lives (or the local health district where the person is being evaluated if the person's residence is unknown or not in Ohio). Required reporters include physicians providing care, administrators in charge of hospitals, clinics or other institutions providing care or treatment, laboratory administrators, or any individual having knowledge of a person with nCoV.

### What is 2019-nCoV?

An outbreak of 2019-nCoV started in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. Chinese authorities are reporting an ongoing spread of the virus in the community and so far more than 830 individuals are ill and 25 people have died. As families prepare to celebrate Chinese/Lunar New Year this week, multiple international travel advisories have been issued to help curb the spread of the illness.

2019-nCoV is part of a large family of coronaviruses, some of which cause illness in people and others that circulate among animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people. This happened with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in 2014, and now 2019-nCoV. These viruses may cause mild to severe respiratory illnesses with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

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### **How is Ohio tracking 2019-nCoV?**

Ohio's public health system includes a team of state experts, local health departments, and local partners that perform daily monitoring of reportable diseases, including 2019-nCoV. ODH is closely monitoring the 2019-nCoV situation in lockstep with the Centers for Disease Control and is ready to respond if a case is reported in Ohio.

"This situation is at the heart of public health," said Dr. Acton. "We are working proactively with healthcare providers and local health districts/partners to identify and appropriately address emerging threats like novel Coronavirus."

### **What happens if a case is reported?**

- A case or suspected case of 2019-nCoV is reported to a local health department.
- ODH reports to the CDC and, if indicated, patient specimens will be collected and shipped.
- Currently, testing for this virus must take place at CDC.
- ODH will work with local, state, and federal partners to investigate reports of 2019-nCoV in order to identify cases and prevent the spread of infection.

### **What can you do to limit risk?**

If you suspect you may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV because you have traveled to China or have been around people who may have been exposed and/or are exhibiting symptoms, contact your healthcare provider and let them know you may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV before visiting the healthcare facility. This will help the healthcare provider's office take precautionary steps to keep other people from being exposed.

Just as with influenza and other illnesses, it's critical to protect yourself. Experts at the Ohio Department of Health recommend these tips:

- Practice good hand hygiene.
- Follow appropriate cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Don't go to work or school when you feel ill. Stay home and rest.
- Avoid exposure to others who are sick.

"Anticipatory action like this is critical to ensuring that we are protecting Ohioans," Dr. Acton said. "It is our sincere hope that this virus does not spread but if it does, Ohio's public health system is prepared."

Although 2019-nCoV is an emerging illness, the Ohio Department of Health has addressed similar issues in the past including two previous coronavirus outbreaks, MERS in 2014 and SARS in 2003.

In addition to the latest work of declaring 2019-nCoV a Class A disease, ODH also routinely collaborates with healthcare providers, local health departments, local health partners, and the CDC to share information and best practices for addressing other potential infectious diseases.

For more information about 2019-nCoV, visit our website at [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov).

### **\*\*\* Note to the Media \*\*\***

Dr. Acton is available for interviews related to 2019-nCoV today.

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