

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS(IHR)/SURVEILLANCE UNIT

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EPI ALERT FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES

VOLUME 2

CORONAVIRUS

The Ministry of Health through PAHO/WHO was notified of 27 cases of acute respiratory syndrome of unknown etiology among people linked to a market in **Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China** on 31 December 2019. A novel coronavirus (COVID-19) which is in the same family as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), was identified as an aetiological agent on 7 January 2020. According to available information, there is now evidence of person to person transmission. **On 11 March 2020, WHO characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic.**

Presently, there are more than 120,000 cases globally inclusive of over 4,000 deaths. More than 100 countries have reported confirmed cases and this is expected to increase. In the face of this, The Bahamas has applied travel restrictions to include South Korea, Iran, Italy, and mainland China. Non-residents coming to The Bahamas from these countries within the previous 20 days will be denied entry. Several other countries have demonstrated local transmission but to date The Bahamas has implemented no travel restrictions to those countries (see www.who.int). The Ministry advises the public that non-essential travel to these areas should be eliminated. Persons who must travel should expect to be routinely screened and tested and, if necessary, quarantined for up to 14 days in those jurisdictions and may be subject to quarantine upon return to The Bahamas.

Coronaviruses are known to also be zoonotic (occur in animals) and are a large family of viruses with illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. COVID-19 is a new strain that has not been previously identified.

Common signs of infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and even death. There are no approved vaccines to treat this disease and is therefore mostly supportive care and avoiding transmission.

Countries are being encouraged to continue strengthening preparedness for health emergencies in line with the International Health Regulations (2005).

CASE DEFINITION (WHO 28-02-2020)

A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and at least one sign/symptom of respiratory disease, e.g. cough, shortness of breath), **AND** with no other aetiology that fully explains the clinical presentation **AND** a history of travel to or residence in a country/area or territory reporting local transmission of COVID-19 disease during the 14 days prior to symptom onset,

OR

A patient with any acute respiratory illness **AND** having been in contact with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case in the last 14 days prior to onset of symptoms,

OR

A patient with severe acute respiratory infection (fever and at least one sign/symptom of respiratory disease, e.g. cough, shortness of breath) **AND** requiring hospitalization **AND** with no other aetiology that fully explains the clinical presentation.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Transmission is prevented by:

- Healthcare workers wearing an N95 mask, eye protection and using contact/droplet/airborne precautions.
- Placing surgical mask on the patient and placing patient in respiratory isolation.
- Covering coughs or sneezes ideally using the sleeve or elbow, if not then cover with a tissue and dispose of the tissue into a garbage bin immediately
- Washing hands with soap and water frequently and immediately after using tissues
- Do not send children to daycare/school if they have a fever
- Avoiding contact with people who are infected or potentially infected

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A SUSPECTED CASE OF CORONAVIRUS:

1. ***Immediately Contact the Surveillance Unit*** at 502-4790, 502-4776, 397-1021(*New Providence*) OR 350-6700 ext 2353 or 359-4541 (*Grand Bahama*) for further information or any concerns. After hours, call 376-3809, 376-4705, or 376-3970.
2. Obtain a **nasopharyngeal viral** swab. Send to PMH Lab.
3. Obtain a detailed travel history
4. Complete The Influenza Case Investigation Form and the Bahamas Lab Form (Detailed address, multiple phone #'s and Date of onset)
5. Immediately notify your healthcare facility's infection control personnel.

Viral nasopharyngeal culture swabs can be obtained from the Microbiology Laboratory.

Cases of Suspected COVID-19 should be:

- Reported on the weekly Syndromic Tally Sheet under **Fever and Respiratory Symptoms**, and
- Reported in The Notifiable Disease Book as **Influenza-Like Illness, suspected Influenza, suspected COVID-19** and *forwarded urgently* to the Surveillance Unit, MOH