

Ministry of Health advice for primary care reception staff responding to members of the public

The novel corona virus (2019-nCoV) has symptoms similar to a range of illnesses such as influenza and may include fever, coughing and difficulty breathing – but these symptoms do not necessarily mean someone has the virus.

1. Information for concerned patients calling requesting an appointment:

Please ask the patient: Within the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms (above), have they:

- a) **Travelled** to the Hubei province (particularly Wuhan) in China;
- OR
- b) Had **close contact** with a person with confirmed infection of novel Coronavirus?

If YES to either a) or b): Advise GP or practice nurse, who will proceed with the checklist (attached) to identify whether the caller could be a suspected case of novel Coronavirus.

2. When a patient turns up to a GP clinic or after-hours centre and indicates they may be at risk of Coronavirus (as above)

Patients who are concerned, and who approach the receptionist for advice should be asked the questions above. If the patient responds YES to either question, they should be asked to wait in a separate area away from the main waiting room, and given a surgical mask to wear until seen.

Advise the GP or practice nurse to see patient and consider if they are a **Suspected Case** (using the [novel coronavirus checklist attached](#)).

3. Advice for recent travellers

People who have been to the Hubei province (particularly Wuhan) in China should remain in their own home and avoid places like child care, schools, aged residential care, hospitals and public gatherings for 14 days following return from China. If they become unwell, please advise them to contact **Healthline** (for free) on 0800 611 116 or to call back to make an appointment.

4. Where to go for further information – for your own information or to give to patients

The situation throughout the world is changing daily and the Ministry of Health is working to keep the health sector and the public up to date as these changes occur.

You or the patient can ring **Healthline** (for free) on 0800 611 116 or you can visit the Ministry of Health's website at [health.govt.nz/coronavirus](https://www.health.govt.nz/coronavirus) more information on 2019-nCoV

5. Looking after your own health

The most important way to stop the spread of infections:

- Regularly wash your hands (for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap and dry thoroughly)
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze
- Stay home if you're sick
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms
- If you do feel unwell you should avoid public gatherings and events
- On current advice, hand and cough hygiene are more effective than masks for reducing the spread of novel Coronavirus.