Interim Guidance about the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) for Hotels and Guesthouses in the Caribbean
February 13, 2020

This document provides information on the COVID-19 for hotels and guesthouses in the Caribbean.

This information is based on currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion and is subject to change as new information becomes available. It should be read in conjunction with relevant national legislation, regulations and policies. This document has been adapted for the Caribbean situation, and therefore may differ from guidance developed by other agencies.

Key Points

- There is an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan, China, caused by a new coronavirus, which is a family of viruses that includes the common cold, named COVID-19.
- Person-to-person spread is occurring in the Wuhan community, increasing the risk of international spread by travellers.
- The immediate health risk from COVID-19 to the general public in the Caribbean remains LOW.
- Travellers from Wuhan to Caribbean Countries may be asked questions about their health and travel history upon arrival, but entrance temperature screening is not recommended.
- This notice will be updated as more information becomes available on the outbreak.

Background

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) is closely monitoring the outbreak of a new coronavirus called COVID-19 which originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The outbreak which started in December 2019 is reported to have affected tens of thousands of persons. The virus has not been previously identified and so, since it is new, there is still little known about it including its origin. CARPHA Incident Management Team for Emergency Response is working closely with its international health partners to respond to this health threat and provide timely advice and assistance to Caribbean Countries. On January 30, 2020 the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). However, the Caribbean Region remains at a low risk of importing a case due to the measures taken by CARPHA and the Member States.
What is the COVID-19?

The virus belongs in the same family of coronaviruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), 2002/03 outbreak (Reuters, CDC) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), 2012 outbreak. This 2019 virus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The cases in the Wuhan pneumonia outbreak have tested negative for both SARS and MERS-CoV. 1,2

What are common signs and symptoms of infection?

A person infected may have the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Breathing difficulties
- Other flu like symptoms
- More severe cases: pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death

How is it transmitted?

Currently, the source of the outbreak is yet to be identified. Early information found samples from the environment in the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan City, but several of those infected did not visit the market. The virus has also been detected in health care workers caring for ill cases. Cases who have come in contact with sick persons have developed illness, indicating that person-to-person transmission has taken place.2,3 Precautions must therefore be taken to prevent human-to-human transmission of the disease.

It is currently unclear what the routes of transmission of COVID-19 are. However, from what we know from experience with other coronaviruses such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), they are mainly transmitted by3:

- Large respiratory droplets and direct or indirect contact with infected secretions
- Body fluids (e.g., blood, sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine, or diarrhea)
- There have been some instances when airborne transmission of other coronaviruses was thought to have taken place through exposure to aerosols of respiratory secretions and sometimes faecal material3
- Coughing or sneezing
- The COVID-19 can be spread by individuals that exhibit no symptoms
- COVID-19 is NOT spread by water, mosquitoes or food.

**What can Hotels and Guesthouses do to be prepared for COVID-19?**

To date, there have been **NO** reported cases of COVID-19 in the Caribbean region. The risk of a case being imported to the Caribbean remains low. Currently, there are no direct flights from Wuhan, China with the Caribbean as the final destination.

Although the risk is low that a case will be identified in a hotel or guesthouse in the Caribbean, there are measures that hotels/guesthouses can do to be prepared:

- Stay informed about the COVID-19 situation in your country. Updates will regularly be released by CARPHA can be accessed at: [www.CARPHA.org](http://www.CARPHA.org). Additionally, information can be found through the WHO or US CDC websites.
- Reduce exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 and a range of illnesses are as follows:
  - Frequently clean hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub
  - When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands
  - Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough
  - If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider
  - Stay home when you are sick to avoid the chance of infecting other people
- Provide staff with educational materials on COVID-19 so that they are aware of the signs and symptoms, where COVID-19 is spreading, and how it is transmitted.
- Ensure that staff members know who to contact in public health in your country, as well as first responders and healthcare providers, if they have any questions or concerns.
- Ensure staff are informed about procedures for reporting guests or other staff with symptoms and exposure history compatible with COVID-19 to the relevant health authorities in your country.
  - Guests or staff suspected to have been exposed to COVID-19, who have symptoms **AND** exposure history consistent with the disease, should call an appropriate healthcare provider. Be sure to inform them that you suspect you were exposed to COVID-19 and ask if they can handle such patients or recommend a specific provider.
  - Seek guidance from your country’s Ministry of Health for which facilities in your area are prepared to handle possibly infected persons.
- Procedures should be in place in the hotel/guesthouse for separating ill guests/staff from the rest of the hotel/guesthouse population and for minimizing the exposure of guests/staff to potentially contaminated environments while Public Health authorities are called.
- Should a suspect case be identified in the hotel/guesthouse staff should feel safe to clean the environment as basic cleaning agents will sufficiently kill the virus. Staff should wear gloves, eye protection, a face mask, and protective gown.
- It is important to ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly. Thoroughly cleaning high-touch surfaces with water
and detergent and applying commonly used disinfectants (such as bleach) are effective and sufficient procedures. Medical devices and equipment, laundry, food service utensils and medical waste should be managed in accordance with safe routine procedures.

- Used linen, cloths, eating utensils, laundry and any other item in contact with a patient’s body fluids should be collected separately and disinfected in such a way as to avoid any contact with persons or contamination of the environment. Surfaces or objects contaminated with blood, other body fluids, secretions or excretions should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible using standard detergents/disinfectants. Manage laundry, food service utensils, and medical waste in accordance with safe routine procedures\textsuperscript{4}, \textsuperscript{5}.
  - Bag or otherwise contain contaminated textiles and fabrics at the point of use
  - Handle contaminated textiles and fabrics with minimum agitation to avoid contamination of air, surfaces, and persons
  - Use leak-resistant containment for textiles and fabrics contaminated with blood or body substances
  - Identify bags or containers for contaminated textiles with labels, colour coding, or other alternative means of communication as appropriate
  - Don’t use laundry chutes
  - If hot-water laundry cycles are used, wash with detergent in water \(>160^\circ\text{F} (>71^\circ\text{C})\) for \(>25\) minutes
- Wear a disposable facemask, gown, and gloves when you touch or have contact with an infected person’s blood, body fluids and/or secretions, such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine, or diarrhoea.
  - Throw out disposable facemasks, gowns, and gloves after using them. Do not reuse.
  - Wash your hands immediately after removing your facemask, gown, and gloves.

Appendix A
For Further Information visit the following websites:

\textsuperscript{5} CDC 2003. Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5210a1.htm
Appendix B

The following infographic from the WHO and IMO illustrates, in summary form, the key points to keep in mind for COVID-19 prevention when travelling on ships.

Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub

Cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow

Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms

Thoroughly cook meat and eggs