

15 Jan 2020

Chinese new year travel advice

Celebrating Chinese New Year abroad? 2020 is the Chinese Year of the Rat and officially starts on 25 January 2020

Travellers planning to celebrate in China should check TravelHealthPro [China Country Information page](#) for current advice to help ensure they have a safe and healthy trip. Travellers visiting other countries to celebrate, can find health advice for their specific destinations on our [Country Information pages](#).

Travellers are also advised to arrange an appointment with their GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel clinic to make sure they are in-date for all recommended travel and routine UK vaccines, including [measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\)](#).

On the 31st December 2019, the World Health Organization was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan in Hubei province [1]. Chinese authorities have now made a preliminary determination of a novel (new) coronavirus, identified in a hospitalized person with pneumonia in Wuhan [2]. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses with some causing less-severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease such as MERS and SARS. The Chinese authorities report that the virus in question can cause severe illness in some patients but does not transmit readily between people [2]. Currently there are no known UK cases but on 13 January 2020, one imported case was reported in Thailand [3].

As of the 12 January 2020, the World Health Organization reported 41 confirmed cases with one death. This death occurred in a person with serious underlying medical conditions. Of the 41 cases reported, seven are severely ill [4]. Check our [China Country Information page](#) outbreak tab for up to date case numbers in China and our [Outbreak Surveillance](#) pages can be checked for cases elsewhere.

Currently there is no clear evidence of human to human transmission and no cases in health care workers [4]. A link with Wuhan South China Seafood Wholesale Market has been identified and the market was closed on 1 January 2020 while investigations continue [4].

Besides the evolving situation in Wuhan, all travellers should also be aware of the risk of [avian flu](#) when visiting China, where human cases continue to be reported [5]. Visitors should avoid exposure to wild birds and poultry. This includes staying away from live bird or animal markets and poultry farms. See Public Health England's infographics, [avian influenza advice for travellers](#).

Advice for travellers

The risk of pneumonia due to the novel coronavirus to the UK population is very low and the risk to travellers to Wuhan is low, but if you are travelling to this area you should take simple precautions in order to minimise the risk of transmission by maintaining good hand and personal hygiene. You should also avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).

Seek medical attention if you develop respiratory symptoms within 14 days of visiting Wuhan, informing your health service prior to attendance about your recent travel to the city.

To reduce the risk of avian influenza, minimise exposure to any birds such as wild birds or live birds in 'wet markets' as a precaution. See Public Health England's [advice on prevention avian influenza](#).

Advice for health professionals

The risk to the UK population is very low and the risk to travellers to Wuhan is low, but they should be advised to take simple precautions such as practicing good hand and personal hygiene, and should also be advised to avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).

If a traveller develops respiratory symptoms within 14 days of visiting Wuhan, please check [PHE's Wuhan novel coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to date guidance.

We will continue to monitor the situation in China and update our reports as further information becomes available.

Resources

- [Food and water hygiene](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Avian influenza in humans](#)
- [Public Health England: Wuhan novel coronavirus and avian flu: advice for travellers over Chinese New Year](#)
- [World Health Organization: Influenza \(avian and other zoonotic\) factsheet](#)
- [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Pneumonia of unknown cause in China](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Pneumonia of unknown cause-China. 5 January 2020. \[Accessed 15 January 2020\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization. Statement Regarding Cluster of Pneumonia Cases in Wuhan, China. 9 January 2020 \[Accessed 15 January 2020\]](#)
3. [World Health Organization. Thailand responding to the novel coronavirus. 13 January 2020. \[Accessed 15 January 2020\].](#)
4. [World Health Organization. Novel Coronavirus - China. 12 January 2020 \[Accessed 15 January\]](#)
5. [World Organisation for Animal Health. Update on avian influenza in animals \(types H5 and H7\). \[Accessed 15 January 2020\]](#)