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Novel coronavirus (COVID-19): general advice for travellers

Advice for travellers from the UK on preparing to travel abroad and reducing spread of respiratory viruses during the COVID-19 outbreak

- **This updates the news of 24 Feb 2020**

The outbreak of [COVID-19](#) continues to evolve and travellers may have questions regarding their travel plans and the best way to prepare and protect themselves from exposure to the new virus.

[Specific recommendations](#) are already in place for those travelling to and from mainland China, and for those travelling from other selected countries and areas. These currently include: Cambodia, Hong Kong, Iran, northern Italy, Japan, Laos, Macao, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma) Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. See our news item for details [1].

Travellers planning to visit other countries may also have concerns.

Advice for travellers

All travellers (including those planning travel to other destinations not listed above) should follow sensible guidance to prepare for their trip and reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19 while this outbreak is on-going [2]:

- Check up to date travel health recommendations on our [Country Information](#) pages, and if you require further advice, speak to your GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel clinic.
- If you are elderly or have pre-existing health issues, you should be aware that if you are infected with COVID-19 you could be at increased risk of severe infection.
- Be aware of, and keep up to date with the latest official advice offered by the country you are departing from or travelling to during this COVID-19 outbreak.
- If you are travelling from the UK, [check the up to date guidance from gov.uk](#) website and for information on any travel restrictions, [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) foreign travel advice](#); (see the summary, health and entry requirements sections). You can also find general travel health advice for each destination on our [Country Information](#) pages.
- Check the impact this outbreak may have on your travel insurance coverage, including medical repatriation costs in case of ill health or any new restrictions on travel. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced [information on travel insurance implications](#) following the outbreak.
- Contact your airline, tour operator, cruise line or other transport and accommodation providers for up-to date information on your itinerary and travel plans
- Be aware that there may be enhanced screening/monitoring at entry and exit ports. You may also be required to self-isolate for a set period, even if you do not have symptoms on your return.

It is important also to check where to get help if you feel unwell within a set period of travel (often 14 days). [Guidance if you are travelling back to the UK](#) is available from the gov.uk website.

In addition to the points above, consider the general advice for preventing the spread of respiratory viruses [3]:

- Wash your hands often with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend work or school.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- Use of facemasks is generally not recommended outside clinical settings. Should you decide to use a mask (or it is a requirement at your destination), you should ensure you continue to use all the recommended precautions in order to minimise the risk of transmission.

If you are fit and well, with no symptoms, there is no evidence that wearing facemasks as a general prevention measure is helpful. Public Health England advises against using masks outside clinical settings. If you decide to use a mask, remember to you should still follow all the recommended precautions above to minimise risk of transmission.

Advice if you have contact with a COVID-19 case while abroad

If you have been in contact with a known COVID-19 case, follow local public health advice (if available), and speak to your healthcare provider or travel insurance company as soon as possible for further guidance.

Advice if you become unwell abroad

If you develop symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath (even if minor) while abroad or during travel, you should immediately:

- Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people, as you would with the flu.
- Call your health provider and/or insurance company to discuss what you should do.
- Follow local public health guidance if available.
- If you become unwell at an airport, bus or train station before or during a long trip, seek medical attention and do not start or continue your journey.
- Once you have fully recovered, check with your health provider if you are fit to travel, before any onward travel.

After travel

[Guidance is available for those who have travelled to specific countries/areas affected by COVID-19 in the last 14 days.](#) Monitor for updates as the list of affected countries / areas could change.

Resources

- [Public Health England: Coronavirus latest information and advice](#)
- [TravelHealthPro: Country Information pages](#)
- [World Health Organization: Q&A on coronaviruses](#)
- [World Health Organization: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\) Guidelines for the use of non-](#)

[pharmaceutical measures to delay and mitigate the impact of 2019-nCoV](#)

- [BMJ Best Practice: COVID-19](#)

References

1. [NaTHNaC. COVID-19- update. 25 February 2020 \[Accessed 25 February 2020\]](#)
2. Rodríguez-Morales A.J., MacGregor K., Kanagarajah, S. Patel, D. and Schlagenhauf P. Going global - Travel and the 2019 novel coronavirus. *Travel Med and Infect Dis.* 2020 Feb 7:101578. doi: 10.1016/j.tmaid.2020.101578. [Epub ahead of print]
3. [Public Health England. Guidance to Assist Professionals in Advising the General Public. Updated 6 February 2020. \[Accessed 25 February 2020\]](#)