



## Ambulance Paramedics & Emergency Dispatchers of BC Provincial Health Information Bulletin (Coronavirus)

The Union is actively working with BCEHS regarding potential exposure plan to deal with (Wuhan) Corona Virus. While we are working with BCEHS, Provincial Safety would like to give some background and information on what the virus is and how to protect against it.

The novel virus, which was first identified last month in Wuhan, China, has so far infected more than 300 people and killed six, in an outbreak that has been reported in five countries -- now including the United States. The CDC confirmed that the man had travelled from Wuhan. The CDC activated its emergency operations center and said it expects more cases in the U.S.

### What you need to know about coronavirus

It has infected more than 200 people since the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December. Scientist Leo Poon, who first decoded the virus, thinks it likely started in an animal and spread to humans. "What we know is it causes pneumonia and then doesn't respond to antibiotic treatment, which is not surprising, but then in terms of mortality, SARS kills 10% of the individuals," Poon, a virologist at the School of Public Health at The University of Hong Kong, said. The [World Health Organization](#) offered guidance to countries on how they can prepare for it, including how to monitor for the sick and how to treat patients.

### What is a coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals. In rare cases, they are what scientists call zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted from animals to humans, according to the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

### Coronavirus symptoms

The viruses can make people sick, usually with a mild to moderate [upper respiratory tract illness](#), similar to a common cold. Coronavirus symptoms include a runny nose, cough, sore throat, possibly a headache and maybe a fever, which can last for a couple of days. For those with a weakened immune system, the elderly and the very young, there's a chance the virus could cause a lower, and much more serious, respiratory tract illness like a pneumonia or bronchitis. There are a handful of human coronaviruses that are known to be deadly.

[Middle East Respiratory Syndrome](#), also known as the MERS virus, was first reported in the Middle East in 2012 and also causes respiratory problems, but those symptoms are much more severe. Three to four out of every 10 patients infected with MERS died, according to the CDC.

[Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#), also known as SARS, is the other coronavirus that can cause more severe symptoms. First identified in the Guangdong province in southern China, according to [the WHO](#), it causes respiratory problems but can also cause diarrhea, fatigue, shortness of breath, respiratory distress

and kidney failure. Depending on the patient's age, the death rate with SARS ranged from 0-50% of the cases, with older people being the most vulnerable.

### How it spreads

Viruses can spread from human contact with animals. Scientists think MERS started in camels, [according to the WHO](#). With SARS, scientists [suspected civet cats](#) were to blame. When it comes to human-to-human transmission of the viruses, often it happens when someone comes into contact with the infected person's secretions. Depending on how virulent the virus is, a cough, sneeze or handshake could cause exposure. The virus can also be transmitted by touching something an infected person has touched and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. Caregivers can sometimes be exposed by handling a patient's waste, [according to the CDC](#).

### Coronavirus treatment

There is no specific treatment. Most of the time, symptoms will go away on their own. Doctors can relieve symptoms by prescribing a pain or fever medication. [The CDC says](#) a room humidifier or a hot shower can help with a sore throat or cough. Drink plenty of fluids, get rest and sleep as much as possible. If symptoms feel worse than a standard cold, see your doctor.

### How can you prevent it

There is [no vaccine](#) to protect against this family of viruses, at least not yet. [Trials for a MERS vaccine](#) are underway. You may be able to reduce your risk of infection by avoiding people who are sick. Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Wash your hands often with soap and water and for at least 20 seconds. If you are sick, stay home and avoid crowds and contact with others. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and disinfect the objects and surfaces you touch.

**For quick references for exposure control refer to your [BCEHS](#) handbook (app) under:**

**(Operations) -> (High Risk Hazards, Safety & CBRNE) -> (PPE & Exposure Control)**

Please contact your APBC safety representative, BCEHS supervisor, or the undersigned for any concerns or questions related to (Wuhan) Corona Virus, best practices or exposure control.

Sincerely,

  
Corey Froese  
Provincial Safety Director  
CUPE Local 873

  
Troy Clifford  
Provincial President  
CUPE Local 873

