

# Coronavirus

## INFORMATION FOR BUSINESSES AND STAFF

A novel coronavirus, also known as SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)-CoV-2, emerged in the Wuhan region of China in December last year. The virus can cause the disease COVID-19. Most patients with coronavirus develop fever and breathing difficulties. The Chinese authorities are working with the World Health Organization (WHO) to investigate this virus. Measures are being taken worldwide to prevent it from spreading further.

The virus was first detected in the Wuhan region of China. It then spread to other countries such as Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Iran, the USA and, later, closer to home in Europe.

Coronavirus has also recently emerged in several places in the Netherlands. For more information, visit [www.rivm.nl](http://www.rivm.nl).

## SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS

People with the novel coronavirus have fever (above 38C) and breathing difficulties such as a cough or shortness of breath.

## CONTAGIOUSNESS

The disease is transmissible from human to human. At present the thinking is that on average, one sick person can infect two other people. The sicker a person is, the more they will spread the virus.

In the Netherlands, the authorities are rigorously identifying anyone patients who have contracted the virus have been in contact with. The Dutch Municipal Health Service (GGD) will monitor all contacts in order to prevent or restrict any further spread of the disease.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS?

The most important steps you can take to prevent the spread of coronavirus are quite simple. These steps apply to all viruses that can cause flu and colds, so it is always important to follow them. They are as follows:

- Wash your hands regularly
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow
- Use paper tissues

When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus is expelled into the air in droplets from the nose, throat or lungs. These droplets are not suspended in the air but drop down quickly. The sicker a person is, the more they will spread the virus. The virus does not survive very long outside the body, including on inanimate objects such as cardboard or packaging materials.

## WHEN SHOULD I PHONE THE DOCTOR?

You should phone your doctor if you:

- have fever and difficulty breathing (cough or shortness of breath)
- and within the past two weeks you have been in a country or region with widespread transmission of coronavirus:

- China (including Hong Kong and Macao), Singapore, South Korea, Iran
- the northern Italian provinces of Aosta Valley, Piedmont, Lombardy, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and Liguria
- or you have been in contact with someone who has the novel coronavirus within the past two weeks.

DO NOT go to your GP or out-of-hours surgery as you may infect other people. Your GP will consult with the GGD as to whether you need to be tested for coronavirus.

### **WHEN SHOULD YOU STAY AT HOME BECAUSE OF CORONAVIRUS?**

Generally speaking, you can go to work as normal. Some people are being advised to limit contact with others. These are people who could potentially become infected with the virus, so they should not go to work. This applies to the following two groups of people:

- People living in the same house as patients with coronavirus
- People who have returned from one of the above-mentioned areas where coronavirus is prevalent and have symptoms of a cold or fever.

These symptoms may be early signs of a coronavirus infection. If you have these symptoms, you should stay at home until you are better so that you do not infect other people. Phone your GP if the symptoms get worse.

### **WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT MY MANAGER?**

Phone your manager from home if you have symptoms of coronavirus as described above.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF ONE OF MY EMPLOYEES HAS CORONAVIRUS?**

If an employee is suspected of having coronavirus, send them home and await their GP's advice. If someone with symptoms presents to a doctor and the doctor thinks the patient may have coronavirus, a protocol is initiated. The doctor will request a test. In the meantime, the patient will be kept in isolation. This may entail a period of self-isolation at home or they may be admitted to hospital, depending on the situation. If they test positive for coronavirus, they will remain in isolation. The GGD will then try to identify who they have been in contact with. Everyone the patient has been in contact with during the infectious period should monitor their health for two weeks. If they develop symptoms, they should report them to the GGD and the process will start again from the beginning.

So it is not the case that everyone at the company needs to stay at home as a preventative measure.

### **I HAVE BEEN ON HOLIDAY IN AN AREA AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

Keep an eye on your health. If you develop symptoms of a cold, stay at home until you are better so that you do not infect other people. Phone your GP if the symptoms get worse or if you develop fever.

If you do not have any symptoms, you can go to work as usual.

### **IS THERE ANY POINT IN BEING TESTED AS A PREVENTATIVE MEASURE?**

No, because that won't produce a definitive result. If you are infected with the virus, during the first few days the virus is only present in the body at very low levels, so the test

will not show that you are infected. That is why people are only tested for coronavirus if they have symptoms or have come from a high-risk area.

### **SHOULD I WEAR A FACE MASK?**

Only healthcare staff need to wear face masks, and they will only help if they are worn properly and replaced every day. For example, you should not touch the outside of the face mask or use the same mask repeatedly.

### **CAN I CATCH THE VIRUS FROM ANIMALS?**

Investigations in China are still ongoing as to whether animals still play a role in transmitting coronavirus, as the source has not yet been identified. The main source of transmission at the moment is human to human. In the Netherlands, the current thinking is that transmission from animal to human cannot take place here because it is highly unlikely that the animal species involved will be present here.

### **HOW DO I KEEP MY BUSINESS RUNNING? DRAW UP AN EMERGENCY PLAN!**

It is important to prevent essential work at your company from coming to a standstill as a result of the disease. You should therefore draw up an emergency plan. Identify the activities that definitely need to continue, such as harvesting, feeding, milking etc., and which people are involved in them. Are there enough people to step in for others? Is there someone to take over from you yourself if need be? What work can be postponed until a much later date? Is there any work that can be done from home? Also ensure that you have adequate hygiene measures in place.

Click [here](#) for more information for businesses from the Dutch government (in Dutch).

Source: RIVM, GGD, NHG (Dutch Society of General Practitioners)

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