

25 February 2020

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has updated its COVID-19 advice in line with the rest of the UK in light of new cases emerging in several countries.

Dr Muhammad Sartaj, Consultant in Health Protection at the PHA, said: “With parts of Italy now coming within the guidance, we appreciate that people who may have travelled to the country recently will be concerned and are seeking advice. This includes parents of children who may have been on school trips over half-term, so we are liaising with Department of Education, Education Authority, and schools, to advise on the impact of the newly-updated guidelines, and how they apply in each set of circumstances.

“Travellers who have been to 11 specific towns in Italy must self-isolate [see notes to editors].

“Anyone who has been in northern Italy (not including Pisa, Florence or Rimini) is asked to stay at home for 14 days if they develop cough, fever, or difficulty breathing and seek medical advice.

“The guidelines apply equally to all travellers to areas covered, whether travel has been for a holiday, school trip, business, or other reason.

“We would urge travellers to any area covered by the guidelines, or those who care for anyone who has travelled, to check the advice, identify if the travel has taken place in any of the relevant areas, and take steps as required. People who have been in contact with those who have travelled in any of the relevant areas do not need to take any steps.”

Advice for travellers with symptoms

If you have been to:

- Northern Italy (not including, Pisa, Florence and Rimini), Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar since 19 February 2020; or
- China, Thailand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Macau in the last 14 days

and have cough, fever, or difficulty breathing, please self-isolate and contact your GP by phone.

If you are not registered with a GP in Northern Ireland, please contact your local Emergency Department. Please do not attend the surgery or hospital without phoning in advance. If it is a medical emergency, call 999 and inform the call handler of your recent travel history.

Advice for travellers without symptoms

Even if you have no symptoms, if you have been to:

- Hubei Province (including Wuhan) in the last 14 days; or
- Iran, specific lockdown areas in Northern Italy [see notes to editors], or special care zones of South Korea [see notes to editors], since 19 February 2020,

please return home, contact the special coronavirus helpline on 0300 200 7885 and follow this advice:

- Stay indoors and avoid contact with others as much as possible for 14 days after you arrive
- Do not go to work, school or public areas
- Avoid visitors in your home
- Do not use public transport or taxis

Overview

Dr Sartaj added: “The PHA is working with partners across the UK including Public Health England, as well as the Department of Health and health trusts in Northern Ireland, and the health service in the Republic of Ireland, on the ongoing global novel coronavirus response.

“To help reduce any potential spread of coronavirus, the PHA is also urging people to follow the steps that we recommend for similar illnesses such as cold and flu – catch it, bin it, kill it. Always carry tissues to catch your cough or sneeze, dispose of the tissue as soon as possible after using it, and clean your hands as soon as you can as germs can spread to every surface you touch.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Specific lockdown areas in northern Italy detailed at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/italy/health

Special care zones in South Korea detailed at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-korea