

-Virus

Coronavirus explained: What you need to know

Five things you should know about coronavirus

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Since late last year, people in the central Chinese city of Wuhan have been infected with a viral pneumonia whose cause was unknown. A preliminary investigation has identified the respiratory disease as a new type of coronavirus, Chinese state media reported on Jan. 9, citing scientists handling the investigation.



As of Jan. 24, 26 people have died and more than 800 cases have been reported in China, the National Health Commission said.

The outbreak has put other countries on alert as millions of Chinese travel for Lunar New Year. Authorities in Singapore, Macau, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, and in Japan have identified new cases, all involving recent travel from China.

Here are five things you should know about coronavirus.

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some of which cause the common cold. Others found in camels, bats, and other animals have evolved into more severe illnesses. They are named for the spikes that protrude from their membranes, which resemble the sun's corona.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of the new illness include high fever, difficulty in breathing, and lung lesions, according to the Wuhan Health Commission. Chills, body aches, and shortness of breath are associated with more dangerous kinds of coronavirus, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

How are coronaviruses spread?

Many coronaviruses can spread through coughing, sneezing, or by touching an infected person. Coronaviruses can spread from human contact with animals. Scien-

tists think MERS started in camels, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). With SARS, scientists found that civet cats were carrying the disease. When it comes to human-to-human transmission of the viruses, it often happens when someone comes into contact with the infected person's secretions.

How can it be treated?

There is no specific treatment for coronavirus. Most of the time, symptoms will go away on their own. Doctors can relieve symptoms by prescribing a fever or pain medication. If you're feeling sick, rest, sleep, and drink plenty of fluids. Seek medical attention if you have flu-like symptoms.

How can you prevent yourself and others from getting sick?

Here are some ways to reduce your risk of coronavirus infection, according to WHO:

- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold or flu-like symptoms
- Thoroughly cook meat and eggs
- Avoid unprotected contact with live wild or farm animals

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