

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RISK BRIEF FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

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VIRUS PROFILE AND IMPACT ON TRAVEL

1. Overview and Background

i In light of the recent coronavirus outbreak and the World Health Organization's designation of the virus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, the physicians at Patronus have complied relevant medical advice in an effort to educate international travelers about the current risk and provide steps that may help mitigate disruptions in travel.

In December 2019, the Chinese authorities began seeing cases emerge in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei Province of patients with pneumonia-like symptoms. It was subsequently identified as a strain of the coronavirus, later designated COVID-19, a virus named for its crownlike appearance. The coronavirus spread rapidly through the epicenter of the outbreak and beyond the province's borders primarily because its symptoms present much like the common-flu and were not initially recognized. In addition, the R0 factor (the number of additional cases the infected person will cause during their illness) ranged between 1.5-5.0 which further propitiated the spread of the virus.

The coronavirus is a respiratory illness that gains entry into the body via mucus membrane portals such as the eyes, nose, and mouth. The virus is found in mucus droplets dispelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Recent findings state, it may also be transmittable through feces. COVID-19 can live outside of the human body on surfaces for up to 2 weeks and thus it is very important to properly wash your hands before touching your face or mouth and to wipe down frequently touched surfaces with 10% bleach (9 parts water 1 part bleach) or its equivalent in order to prevent further spread of the virus.

The incubation period for the disease is between 2-14 days, but indications that it could be up to 24 days are now emerging. Initial symptoms include: fever, cough, shortness of breath, and overproduction of phlegm. The severity varies greatly ranging from asymptomatic (no symptoms) to severe lung infection and even death. The ultimate severity of the disease depends greatly on age, sex, and other underlying health issues. Men are twice as likely to develop the disease, and men over the age of 60 are at an even greater risk. Importantly, it should be noted that over 80% of cases are considered mild whereas only 4-5% are considered critical.

In short, the coronavirus should be taken seriously; however, it is important to consider this outbreak in the context of other illnesses such as influenza. According to the CDC, last year the common flu accounted for 34,200 deaths in the U.S., and 61,000 the year before. While it is important monitor the evolving situation, below is some key information regarding the steps you can take to manage your health and decrease the chance of acquiring or transmitting the virus while traveling.

2. Geographic Risk Profile and Impact on Travel

i COVID-19 is currently present in 96 countries (as of 6 March 2020), with new cases emerging daily. The CDC provides a regularly updated global map of confirmed cases, click [here](#) to reference. Below is a collection of

information from the U.S. State Department and the U.K. Foreign Office regarding how the Coronavirus might impact your international travel plans.

Travel Ban

Countries considered “High Risk” zones have been placed on the highest alert, Level 4, by the State Department. It is strongly advised to avoid travel to these areas. Travel to countries on this list may require a mandatory 14-day quarantine. These countries include:

- *Iran and China*

Guidance on travel to China – All travel to Hubei Province should be avoided and travel for all but essential travel to the rest of mainland China should be halted.

Reconsider Travel

As the virus spreads globally, certain countries have recorded large numbers of cases and/or the rapid acceleration of the virus throughout the country. While governments are taking measures to contain further spread of COVID-19, the U.S. government recommends individuals reconsider travel to these Level 3 designated areas to avoid contracting the virus, potential quarantine, and/or travel disruption due to the temporary suspension of transit (i.e. airline, train, cruise ship, and bus travel). These countries include:

- **Europe** : *Italy*
- **Asia** : *South Korea and Mongolia*

Guidance on travel to Italy – Extraordinary measures have been taken by the Italian government to lockdown and isolate the regions most impacted by the recent outbreak in Northern Italy. All but essential travel to small towns in Lombardy and Veneto should be avoided. The situation is ever evolving and travelers should expect flight cancellations.

Guidance on travel to South Korea – Abstain from all travel, including essential travel, to Daegu as a result of the continued outbreak, high incidence of community transmission, and overstrained medical infrastructure. All but essential travel to Cheongdo should be avoided as well. Both Daegu and Cheongdo have been designated as “special care zones” by the South Korean authorities which requires the public to follow the instructions and restrictions imposed by the government.

Guidance for Cruise Travel - The State Department is also asking those considering a cruise to Asia to postpone until the outbreak subsides. Click [here](#) for a complete list of the State Department’s recommendations regarding cruise travel.

Possible Travel Disruption

Countries classified as with a Level 2 advisory ask travelers to exercise increased caution when traveling. While no travel restrictions are imposed, recent actions taken by commercial airlines and could result in the disruption, rerouting, or cancellation of flights. A list of these countries are as follows:

- **Europe** : *Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom*
- **Asia** : *Japan*, Hong Kong**, Macau, Burma (Myanmar)*

**United Airlines has suspended certain routes to Japan, expect more U.S. carriers to follow suit.*

***An updated list of carriers that have suspended flights to/from Hong Kong can be found [here](#).*

3. Things to Consider Prior to Departure

i Country Entry Requirements

At present, every country is taking their own precautions regarding the outbreak. It is highly recommended to consult the US Embassy’s website of the specific country you will be traveling to for location requirements. It

should be noted that individual countries have different entry and exit requirements based upon the country you have entered from and the presentation of symptoms.

Quarantine Requirements

Many countries are not taking chances and ask individuals returning from areas with the presence of the virus to immediately self-impose quarantine at home and contact local authorities even if mild symptoms are presented. Minor symptoms include: cough, fever, and shortness of breath (and any other flu-like symptoms). Country authorities will provide further instruction on requirements and next steps.

Pre-Departure Checklist

- Register with the U.S. State Department's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) for location based updates.
- Consult the U.S. Embassy's website for all countries traveling to on your trip between 12-24 hours before departure for any new location-specific developments.
- Monitor airline cancelations for routes to your destination, be sure to remember your layover(s). Check with your airline carrier 12 hours before departure.
- Take measures to boost your immune system: get plenty of rest, increase Vitamins D3 and C in your diet, exercise, and moderate your alcohol intake.
- Pack hand sanitizer and wipes with at least 60% alcohol.

4. Prevention During Travel

i Below is a list of measures you can take to reduce the chance of acquiring the virus:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water, including the tops of your hands and in between your fingers, for at least 20 seconds. In the absence of soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. The virus gains entry into the body through these mucus portals.
- Reduce contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, dispose of the tissue in the trash, and then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Disinfect the airplane arm rests, tray tables, and other personal surfaces with a sanitizing wipe.
- Clean frequently touched objects with disinfecting wipes (i.e. cellphones, keyboards, and tables).
- If you are feeling ill and must be in public, it would be beneficial to wear a mask to prevent spreading illness. Conversely, the effects of wearing a mask to prevent illness are minimal.

5. Preparation for Your Return to the U.S.

i While you may have managed the trip with few inconveniences and obstacles, it is still a good idea to ensure your trip home will not be met with any challenges on account of the evolving situation. Here are some tips to increase the chances of a smooth trip home:

- Monitor the ongoing situation throughout the duration of your trip, caseloads are constantly changing and may look different than when you first arrived in the country.
- Check to see if your departure country's travel advisory level has been elevated by the State Department.
- Ensure the U.S. State Department's travel advisory level for any layover countries remain at a 1 or 2. Note: Some airlines have suspended or rerouted flights in and out of countries with an advisory level of 2.
- Mind your own health. If you are returning from an identified area of concern, you may be required to go through additional screening. Presentation of flu-like symptoms at ports of entry could cause delay. If you are feeling ill, contact local authorities for further instruction prior to travel.

6. Sources and Further Resources

- i**
- Center for Disease Control – [Coronavirus Disease Profile](#)
 - Johns Hopkins – [COVID-19 Global Cases Map](#), tallied and detailed by country
 - National Institute of Health – [Coronavirus Information](#)
 - State Department – [Country Designation and Predeparture Information](#)
 - State Department – [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), enroll before travel to receive location specific updates
 - United Kingdom Foreign Office – [Travel Advice](#), a resource for traveling through or to Europe
 - World Health Organization (WHO) – [General Information](#)
 - WHO – [Daily Situational Reports](#)