

INFECTIOUS DISEASES 

Coronavirus COVID-19

– Latest Updates

Updated on 5 March at 12:30 am

At the beginning of the year, an epidemic caused by the new coronavirus COVID-19 began in China. THL is monitoring the international situation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), developing guidelines for health care and laboratories, assessing the health risks related to the coronavirus and drawing up assessments of how the situation with the virus may develop.

We will update this page with the latest information on the spread of the virus and with instructions for preventing infection.

- So far, more than 95,000 cases have been diagnosed, of which more than 15,000 have been outside of mainland China. The total number of cases includes both the laboratory-confirmed cases (WHO's case definition) and the cases that have been clinically diagnosed on the basis of symptoms in China.
- So far, most of the cases have been recorded in China, and the majority of them have been found in the city of Wuhan and the province of Hubei. In China, the number of cases has been declining since mid-February. It is not yet possible to draw sufficiently reliable conclusions on the direction of the epidemic.

Number of cases outside China is on the rise

- The number of cases is increasing across the world. For example, more than 5,700 cases have been reported in South Korea, more than 300 cases in Japan and almost 3,000 cases in Iran.
- So far, more than 3,200 people have died from the virus, with the majority of these deaths occurring in Hubei province.
- [Number of cases in different countries](#) (WHO)

Epidemic area

- Epidemic areas are defined as those where more extensive chains of infection are being seen. Currently, the epidemic areas cover mainland China, Iran, South Korea and Italy. The situation is nevertheless subject to ongoing assessment.
- Check the Ministry for Foreign Affairs website for the latest [travel advisories \(in Finnish\)](#). There you can find important information about travelling abroad and instructions on how to submit a travel report.

The situation in Europe

- A total of approximately 4,200 cases have been diagnosed in Europe.
- The number of cases in Europe has been on the rise since the end of February, mainly because of the situation with the epidemic in Italy.
- In Italy, more than 3,000 cases have so far been diagnosed. THL has defined all of Italy as an epidemic area as from 3 March.
- Travelling in the epidemic area involves a high risk of infection.
- In many countries in Europe and elsewhere, cases related to the infection chains in Italy have been

reported among people who have been travelling. More than 500 cases in total have been reported in Germany and France.

- Summary of confirmed cases in Europe on [ECDC's website](#).
- [COVID-19 situation in the WHO European Region](#) (WHO)

The situation in Finland

- It is important to investigate the possibility of the coronavirus infection in all persons who meet the sampling criteria mentioned in THL's instructions for health care. By 5 March 2020, samples from approximately 360 patients meeting the criteria have been examined in Finland.
- So far, 12 laboratory-confirmed cases caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) have been diagnosed in Finland.
- The cases can be divided by hospital district as follows: the region of Helsinki and Uusimaa 9, Kanta-Häme 1, Pirkanmaa 1 and the Lapland Hospital District 1.
- Seven of the infections are directly linked to tourism and five are further infections.
- All of the cases found in Finland have been mild.
- Rapid identification of cases is important so that effective control measures can be implemented to reduce the risk of further infections. Finnish hospitals are well prepared for examining and treating coronavirus infections in isolation.
- It is likely that cases of the disease will be found in Finland as a result of tourism and other international travel also in the future and further infections related to them are possible.
- Finland is also preparing for a potential wider epidemic.

What do we know about the novel coronavirus?

- The virus mainly spreads from person to person through droplet transmission in close contact. The incubation time, which is the time from the exposure to the first symptoms, is estimated to be approximately 2-12 days, on average approximately 4-5 days. How efficiently the virus spreads and the period of infectiousness are not yet well known.
- The patients' symptoms include fever, coughing and shortness of breath.
- So far, approximately 80% of the reported cases have been mild and the patients have recovered. The disease has been more severe in approximately 14% of the patients, causing symptoms such as pneumonia and/or shortness of breath, and 6% of the patients have been in a critical condition.
- The mortality rates of the disease are difficult to estimate. All asymptomatic and milder cases may not have been detected and reported. A comparison of mortality rates between different countries may provide a misleading picture of what the actual mortality rate currently is or will be if the epidemic spreads.
- The largest number of severe cases and deaths have been recorded in people aged over 60, who already have an underlying disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure or a cardiovascular disease. People aged over 80 have the highest risk.
- The number of cases diagnosed in children and young people has been low and their symptoms have been mild. Only approximately 2% of all reported cases have been diagnosed in people aged under 19. The disease has been severe in only a very small proportion of young people.

The novel coronavirus is likely to have

- originated from an individual infection from an animal to a person, after which the virus has started to spread between people. However, which animal was the source of the infections is not yet known.
- Coronaviruses have been identified both in people and in animals. They usually cause a mild respiratory infection. Serious cases have previously been caused by the SARS and MERS coronaviruses. The new coronavirus is genetically similar to the SARS coronavirus.
- Coronavirus infections can be prevented with good hand hygiene. Instructions: [Hand washing and coughing](#)

International risk assessment

- The ECDC and WHO regularly update their assessment of the situation. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare is monitoring the international situation.
- According to the ECDC's estimation, the risk of COVID-19 coronavirus infection in the EU countries is currently moderate. Travelling in the epidemic area involves a high risk of infection.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the new coronavirus found in the city of Wuhan in China a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).
- The World Health Organization (WHO) is not recommending any specific measures to tourists nor any restrictions on travel or international trade.
- [COVID-19 \(ECDC\)](#)
- [Coronavirus disease outbreak \(WHO\)](#)

More information

- [Information about the disease: novel coronavirus](#) (in Finnish)

- [Frequently asked questions about the novel coronavirus](#) (in Finnish)

Guidelines for tourists

- Check the Ministry for Foreign Affairs website for [the latest travel advisories](#) (in Finnish). There you can find important information about travelling abroad and instructions on how to submit a travel report.
- [Instructions for people travelling in the epidemic area](#)
- [Instructions for passengers arriving in Finland](#)
- [Global cases of COVID-19](#) (Johns Hopkins CSSE)
- [COVID-19 situation in the WHO European Region](#) (WHO)

THL guidelines for health care

[Instructions for the novel coronavirus incidents](#)
(THL)

[Laboratory studies of the novel coronavirus](#)
(THL)

Media enquiries:

Jussi Sane

Leading expert

THL

tel. +358 29 524 7406

firstname.lastname@thl.fi

Taneli Puumalainen

Chief Physician

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

tel. 029 524 6080

firstname.lastname@thl.fi

Mika Salminen

Director of Department,

The Department of Health Security

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

tel. 029 524 8454

firstname.lastname@thl.fi

WHAT'S NEW

4 Mar 2020

[Corona virus is transmitted in everyday life through respiratory droplets and direct contact](#)

4 Mar 2020

[Coronavirus situation has changed – Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has updated its instructions regarding Italy](#)

27 Feb 2020

[Coronavirus case diagnosed in the Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa](#)

25 Feb 2020

[The coronavirus situation has changed – the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has updated its instructions](#)

24 Feb 2020

[Coronavirus situation and prevention measures to be reviewed today](#)

[See all news on Coronavirus COVID-19](#) 

MORE INFORMATION

- [Information about the disease: novel coronavirus \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Frequently asked questions about the novel coronavirus \(in Finnish\)](#)



WHAT'S NEW

TOPICS

SERVICES

**RESEARCH AND
EXPERT WORK**

STATISTICS

PUBLICATIONS

ABOUT US

© THL 2020 — FINNISH INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, PO BOX 30, FI-00271 HELSINKI

• +358 29 524 6000

• [FEEDBACK](#)

• [ABOUT](#)

• [CONTACT](#)

