

INFECTIOUS DISEASES 

## Coronavirus COVID-19

### – Latest Updates

**Updated on 16 March at 14:00.**

At the beginning of the year, an epidemic caused by the new coronavirus COVID-19 began in China.

So far, nearly 165,000 cases have been diagnosed globally. A total of 146 countries have reported infections.

### Epidemic areas

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus epidemic a pandemic on 11 March 2020.
- Epidemic areas are defined as those where more extensive chains of infection are being seen. The epidemic situation in Europe has been changing rapidly, and as a result, the classification of countries as epidemic areas has been abandoned. The risk of coronavirus infection has increased throughout Europe and around the world. Many countries have imposed travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the epidemic.
- THL is monitoring and assessing the situation together with the European Centre for Disease Prevention (ECDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Due to the exceptional situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic,

the Ministry for Foreign Affairs recommends avoiding all travel for the time being.

- Ministries have made an agreement with telephone operators and the Emergency Response Centre Agency that all passengers returning to Finland from abroad will receive a text message concerning coronavirus: “Coronavirus information: Arriving from abroad, agree on a period of absence (14 days recommended) with your workplace, education institution and day care. For information about coronavirus, see THL.fi.”

## Infections diagnosed in Finland

- So far, 272 laboratory-confirmed cases caused by the new coronavirus (COVID-19) have been diagnosed in Finland (16 March 2020 at 14:00).
- The sampling criteria for COVID-19 have been changed. With suspected infections, samples are primarily taken from patients with severe respiratory tract infection symptoms and from healthcare and social welfare personnel. Samples from people with mild symptoms returning from trips are still taken at the discretion of a physician. Asymptomatic people are not tested.
- Confirmed cases can be divided by hospital district as follows (in alphabetical order):
  - South Karelia Social and Health Care District (Eksote): 3
  - Hospital District of Southern Ostrobothnia (EPSHP): 2
  - South Savo Hospital District (ESSOTE): 2
  - Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa (HUS): 149
  - Kanta-Häme Hospital District (KHSHP): 10
  - Central Ostrobothnia Hospital District (SOITE): 2

- Central Finland Health Care District (KSSHP): 15
  - Lapland Hospital District (LSPH): 3
  - Länsi-Pohja Hospital District (LPSHP): 2
  - Pirkanmaa Hospital District (PSHP): 25
  - North Karelia Hospital District (PKSSK): 1
  - Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District (PPO): 27
  - North Savo Hospital District (PSSH): 3
  - Päijät-Häme Hospital District (PHHYKY): 1
  - Satakunta Hospital District: 9
  - Vaasa Hospital District (VSHP): 2
  - Southwest Finland Hospital District (VSSH): 15
  - Regional information not confirmed: 1
- We publish the statistics every day with the laboratory-confirmed cases reported by the hospital districts. There may be a delay with the reported numbers. For a few cases, regional information has been corrected, and this information may still be further specified. The latest figures describing the number of infections are not fully comparable with the previous figures. Hospital districts are testing for coronavirus according to their resources, following the instructions of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
  - The reported number of cases is grouped by the hospital district of the infected person. If no information on the municipality of residence is available, the result is assigned to the area of the hospital district that took the sample.

## The situation in Finland

- Most of the COVID-19 cases diagnosed in Finland have been mild. Some of those infected have also required hospital care.
- The sampling criteria for COVID-19 have been changed. With suspected infections, samples are primarily taken from patients with severe respiratory tract infection symptoms and from healthcare and social welfare personnel. Samples from people with mild symptoms returning from trips are still taken at the discretion of a physician. Asymptomatic people are not tested.
- Other Nordic countries, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom among others have also shifted to a similar sampling strategy.
- For example, health care personnel returning from abroad have been tested with a low threshold in order to prevent the spread of infections in health care.
- Finland is preparing for a wider epidemic. The speed at which the epidemic develops will most likely vary across the country. In areas where there are signs of the spread of the epidemic, the focus should be on protecting risk groups, i.e. the elderly and people with underlying conditions.
- The Finnish Government recommends cancelling all public events with more than 500 participants until 31 May. The organisers of other gatherings are also recommended to conduct their own risk assessments and make decisions on organising similar events. See also [Government recommendations for workplaces and close contact](#).
- Rapid identification of cases continues to be important in order to slow down the progress of the epidemic.
- It is important for people with mild respiratory tract infection symptoms to see it through at home and to

avoid social contact. Reducing social contact is also important for healthy people. This way, the spread of the epidemic can be slowed down.

- Finnish hospitals are well prepared for examining and treating coronavirus infections in isolation.
- Direct conclusions for the situation in Finland or its development cannot be drawn from the epidemic situations in other countries.

## The situation in Europe

- The coronavirus situation in Europe is changing rapidly, and the number of cases is increasing.
- Nearly 55,000 cases have been diagnosed in Europe.
- The majority of the cases in Europe have been recorded in Italy, almost 25,000 cases. The health care system in Italy is severely overburdened.
- In large countries, such as Spain, France and Germany, the number of cases is increasing.
- Many European countries have closed their borders to prevent or slow down the epidemic.
- A large number of infections have also been reported in the Nordic countries. Both Denmark and Norway have set travel restrictions.
- We are particularly monitoring and assessing the situation closely in the Nordic countries.
- A summary of cases diagnosed in Europe [on the ECDC website](#).
- [Numbers of cases in the European countries](#) (WHO)

## Epidemic situation elsewhere in the world

- Outside Europe, for example South Korea, Iran and the United States have reported thousands of cases. In the United States, there are probably many more cases than reported.

- The number of reported cases worldwide has exceeded the figures reported by China. China has reported over 81,000 cases, and the epidemic appears to be subsiding in China.
- So far, nearly 6500 people have died from the virus, with the majority of these deaths – over 3,200 – occurring in China. The vast majority of infected people have recovered.
- [Number of cases in different countries \(WHO\)](#)

## What do we know about the novel coronavirus?

- The virus mainly spreads from person to person through droplet transmission in close contact. The virus can survive on surfaces and can also be transmitted as a contact infection by handling materials or surfaces contaminated with the sputum of an infected person. Nevertheless, this is not considered the main route of infection.
- In everyday life, you can reduce your risk of infection by maintaining good hand hygiene.
- The incubation time, which is the time from the exposure to the first symptoms, is estimated to be approximately 1-12 days, on average approximately 5-6 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.
- Similarly, it is also difficult to estimate the number of people who have recovered from the disease. Different countries interpret the recovery criteria differently, and Finland, for example, does not provide information to the public on the health status of patients for reasons of privacy.
- According to the World Health Organisation WHO, over 70% of the over 80,000 infected people in China have recovered.
- The largest number of severe cases and deaths have been recorded in people aged over 70, who already have an underlying disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure or a cardiovascular disease. People aged over 80 face 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. THL is monitoring the international situation, 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.
- On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the new coronavirus epidemic 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 \(COVID-19\) 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)

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[Coronavirus infection now a risk in many countries – efforts being made to slow the start of the epidemic in Finland](#)

11 Mar 2020

[If you are at all unwell, ring your grandparents instead of visiting](#)

9 Mar 2020

[Coronavirus situation has changed – Tyrol in Austria and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany are now part of the epidemic area](#)

6 Mar 2020

[Three new coronavirus infections diagnosed in Finland](#)

4 Mar 2020

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

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### MORE INFORMATION

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

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