

NEWS BRIEF

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COVID-19 Outbreak Continues to Worsen

The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global public health emergency. In the wake of this announcement, countries worldwide are warning against traveling to China, where the outbreak continues to spread rapidly. The most recent reports, as of Feb. 25, 2020, reveal that over 76,700 people have been infected with and 2,249 have died from the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that this outbreak is a rapidly evolving situation, citing that it will provide [updates](#) as they become available. More than two dozen countries, including the United States, have confirmed cases of COVID-19.

What is a coronavirus?

According to the CDC, coronaviruses are common in animal species, and most don't affect humans. As of now, only seven different coronaviruses are known to infect humans. Common coronaviruses typically cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illness, and those affected exhibit cold-like symptoms.

However, the COVID-19, as well as two other human coronaviruses, have caused severe symptoms. In 2012, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreak caused severe illness. Nearly 4 out of 10 people who contracted MERS-CoV died. The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), which was first reported in Asia in 2003, spread to two dozen countries, infected 8,098 people and caused 774 deaths before it was contained. In the case of MERS-

CoV and SARS-CoV, officials believe that the virus was spread via person-to-person contact with respiratory pathogens (e.g., through sneezing and coughing).

In each case of these severe coronaviruses, the outbreaks required comprehensive response from public health organizations. Officials believe that the COVID-19 outbreak will require the same. However, public health officials stress that this situation is still evolving, and there's much that is still unknown.

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"There is new information hour by hour, day by day that we are tracking and following closely."

- ***Nancy Messonnier, MD, Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC***

What's next?

More information will be provided by the WHO and the CDC as it becomes available. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as necessary.