

ALERT #17
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
Change to case definition
26 March 2020

Dear Clinicians,

There are now 8 patients total diagnosed in the NT with COVID19. A couple, both in their 70s, were diagnosed last night in Darwin after return from overseas. On feeling unwell they attended Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) telling of their overseas travel, and were tested.

All 8 cases have acquired their disease overseas and all are currently hospitalised in RDH in strict isolation. Contact tracing on all cases is extensively being carried out with close contacts followed daily.

An additional NT resident, who was a passenger on the Ruby Princess was diagnosed in Sydney after disembarking. This man in his 60s remains in Sydney for his management and brings the NT total to 9.

The information below is for **identifying COVID-19 in the NT** with newer additions **shown in red**. This differs in minor ways from the [National Guidelines](#) and includes interstate travellers in the epidemiological criteria.

Key Messages:

- The case definition for a suspect case now includes **interstate travellers** (in addition to international travellers) in the epidemiological criteria (A).
- Fever is defined as: **temperature $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or history of fever (eg. night sweats, chills) in both the clinical criteria (A) and healthcare worker category (C).**
- The health care worker clinical definition has changed to a **fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$)** or history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) **OR** an acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat). This had previously been fever AND respiratory symptoms.
- Test according to case definition and remind people to stay in self-isolation until test results are back (results may take up to 72hrs depending on time and location of test) or if in quarantine, they must complete the 14 days in quarantine.
- **Do NOT test ASYMPTOMATIC people for COVID-19.**
- **Call Darwin CDC on 8922 8044, Alice Springs on 8951 7540 or email on cdc.covid@nt.gov.au: about all patients tested providing:**
 - a. Name
 - b. Date of birth
 - c. Phone number
 - d. Reason for test (travel or contact and symptoms)
- ALL people returning from overseas after midnight 15 March 2020 **and people returning from interstate after 4pm on 24 March, 2020 must remain in quarantine for the full 14 days after returning, regardless if they have tested negative to COVID-19 within this time period.**
- The CDC alerts are now online at www.health.nt.gov.au.
- **Support all in the NT to do the right thing by social distancing and where indicated, quarantine and self-monitor for disease.**

Case Definition in the NT

Confirmed case

A person who tests positive to validated specific SARS-CoV-2 NAT or has virus identified by electron microscopy or viral culture.

Suspect case:

A. If the patient satisfies epidemiological and clinical criteria, they are classified as a suspect case.

Epidemiological criteria

- Any international **or interstate travel** in the 14 days before the onset of illness.
OR
- Close contact in 14 days before illness onset with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

AND

Clinical criteria

- Fever (**$\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$**) **or history of fever (eg. night sweats, chills)**
OR
- Acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough or sore throat) with or without fever.

B. If the patient has severe bilateral community-acquired pneumonia (critically ill*) and no other cause is identified, with or without recent international travel, they are classified as a suspect case.

C. If any healthcare worker with direct patient contact has a fever (**$\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$**) **or history of fever (eg. night sweats, chills)**

OR an acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat), they are classified as a suspect case (see Healthcare workers for further information).

*requiring care in ICU/HDU, or for patients in which ICU care is not appropriate, respiratory or multiorgan failure. Clinical judgement should be exercised considering the likelihood of COVID-19.

For more information:

- Visit the Australian Government Department of Health webpage at <https://www.health.gov.au>
- The general public who want more information or are concerned about their health can call the COVID-19 health direct line on 1800 020 080 or visit <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>.

Yours sincerely

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