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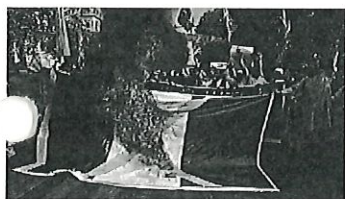
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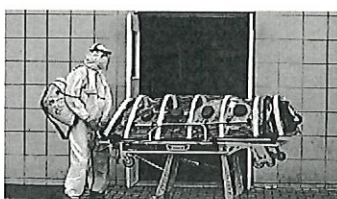
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# Coronavirus in New Zealand: Should I wear a mask? Your Covid-19 questions answered

29 Feb, 2020 06:10 PM

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NZ Herald

By: **Michael Neilson** and **Bernard Orsman**

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**The first case of the new coronavirus - Covid-19 - has been confirmed in New Zealand. The person - a New Zealand citizen in their 60s - is in isolation at Auckland City Hospital after returning from Iran via Bali. Here are some key questions and answers about the virus and its potential impact in New Zealand.**

### **What is Covid-19?**

Coronaviruses are a large and diverse family of viruses which includes the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome – better known as Sars - and Middle East respiratory syndrome (Mers).

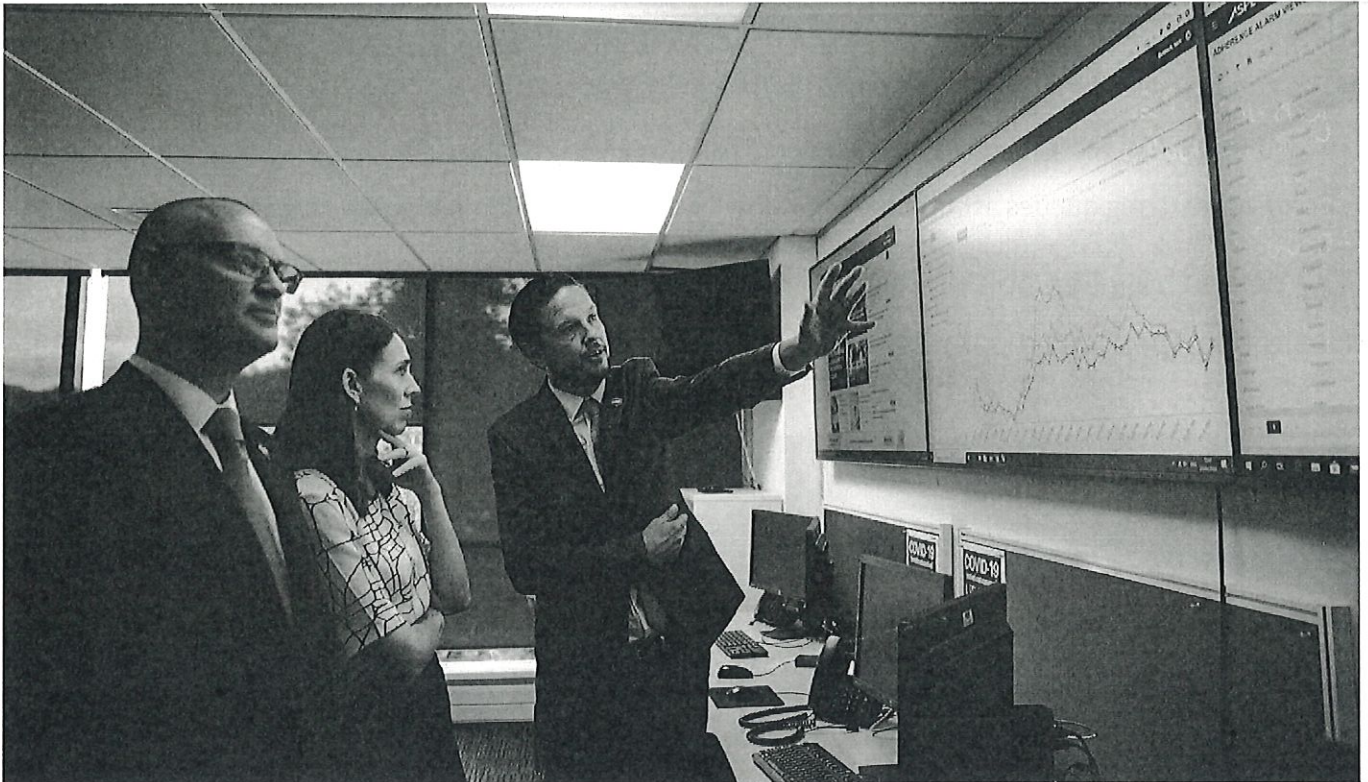
This year, officials identified a new one called novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV or Covid-19.

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Experts from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention have confirmed the virus first jumped from animals to humans inside the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in the heart of city.





Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Health Minister David Clark meet with staff at the Healthline office in Auckland. Photo / Sylvie Whinray

### What are the symptoms?

Its symptoms - fever, coughing and difficulty breathing - are similar to a range of other illnesses such as influenza.

### Should we be worried and how is New Zealand planning to contain it?

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said there is no need for New Zealanders to panic following the first confirmed case, with the country "well prepared".

The way this case was handled was "text book", she said.

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The person travelled home privately from the airport to their family, felt unwell, contacted Healthline, then was recommended to come into hospital where they were kept isolated.

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Health officials were now taking steps like contact tracing, and quarantining and observation of those people who had contact with the person who tested positive.

A pandemic plan has been in place since January to guide actions around the virus, which included border restrictions for people travelling from China, and now Iran.

People who have arrived from those countries or have been in close contact with someone confirmed with Covid-19 in the past 14 days are being asked to self-isolate for a 14-day period.





Travellers at Hong Kong International Airport. Photo / Getty Images

University of Otago professor of public health Michael Baker has reassured average Kiwis to go about "business as usual" following the first confirmed case of coronavirus, saying the risk of contraction is low.

How the case was dealt with was actually "a really nice example of how the [Kiwi health] system is responding" to the world health emergency.

University of Auckland microbiologist Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles previously told the Herald the chances of New Zealand seeing an outbreak like is happening in China is very low due to having much lower population density and greater ability to isolate infected people.

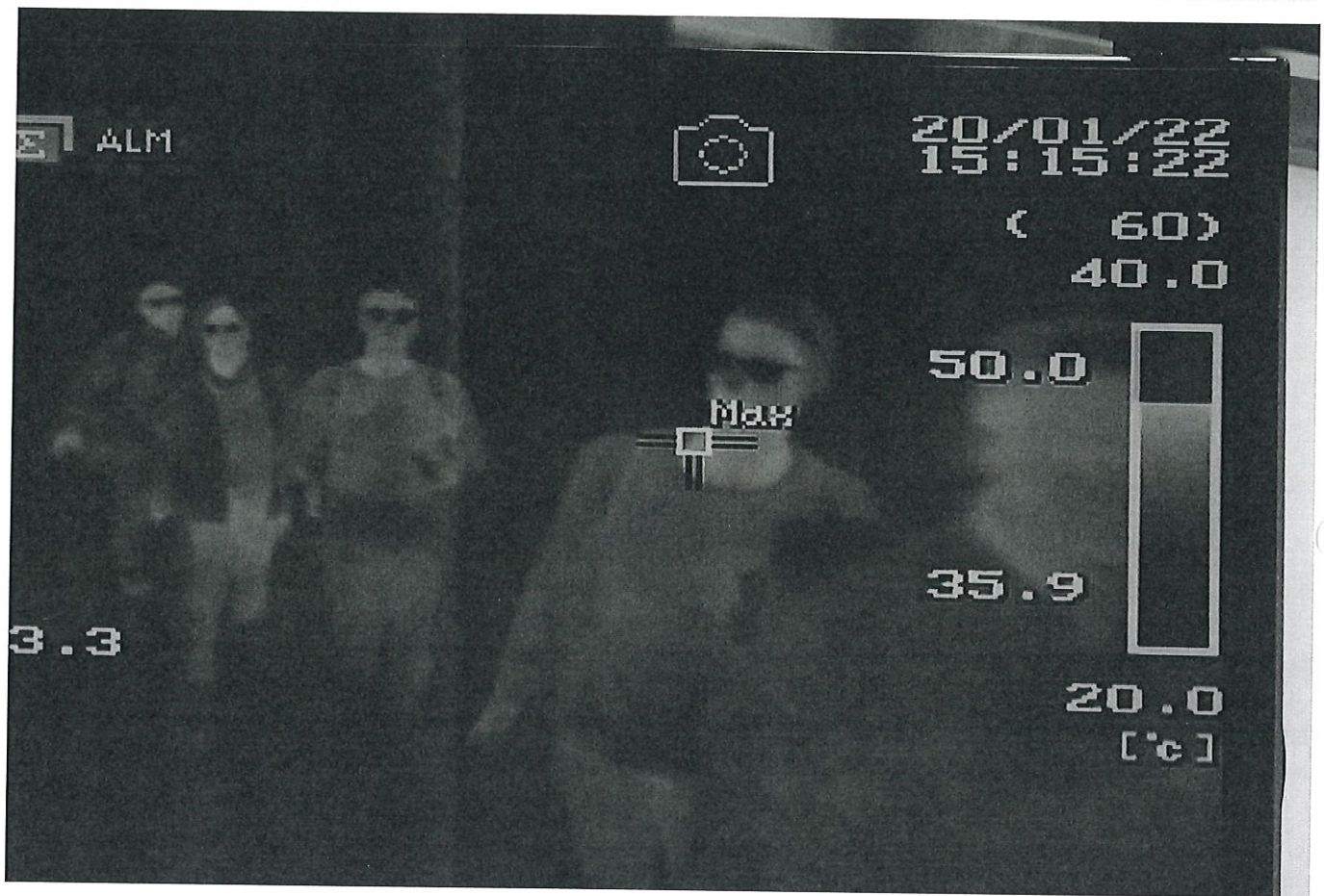
For more details on what is planned go to the Ministry of Health website, [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz).

**Why are they not testing all that were on Emirates EK450 flight? It seems like it is highly contagious so why not?**

Deputy General of Health Ashley Bloomfield told a media briefing the virus is spread by droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

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A thermal scanner of passengers passing through a quarantine station at Narita Airport in Narita, Chiba Prefecture, Japan. Photo / Bloomberg

University of Otago professor of public health Michael Baker said probably the only ones who needed to be worried were those near the confirmed case on the plane.

"It doesn't get transmitted completely throughout the airplane environment. It depends on what symptoms were on the flight," Baker said.

#### **Where has the infected person been since they arrived in New Zealand?**

The Ministry of Health has not given specific details about the person besides the fact they travelled home from the airport in a private car.

After contacting Healthline they went straight to the emergency department and had masks on.



Airport authorities prepare for Covid-19 check-up in Moscow, Russia. Photo / Getty Images

Other people in the household are in isolation as a precautionary measure.

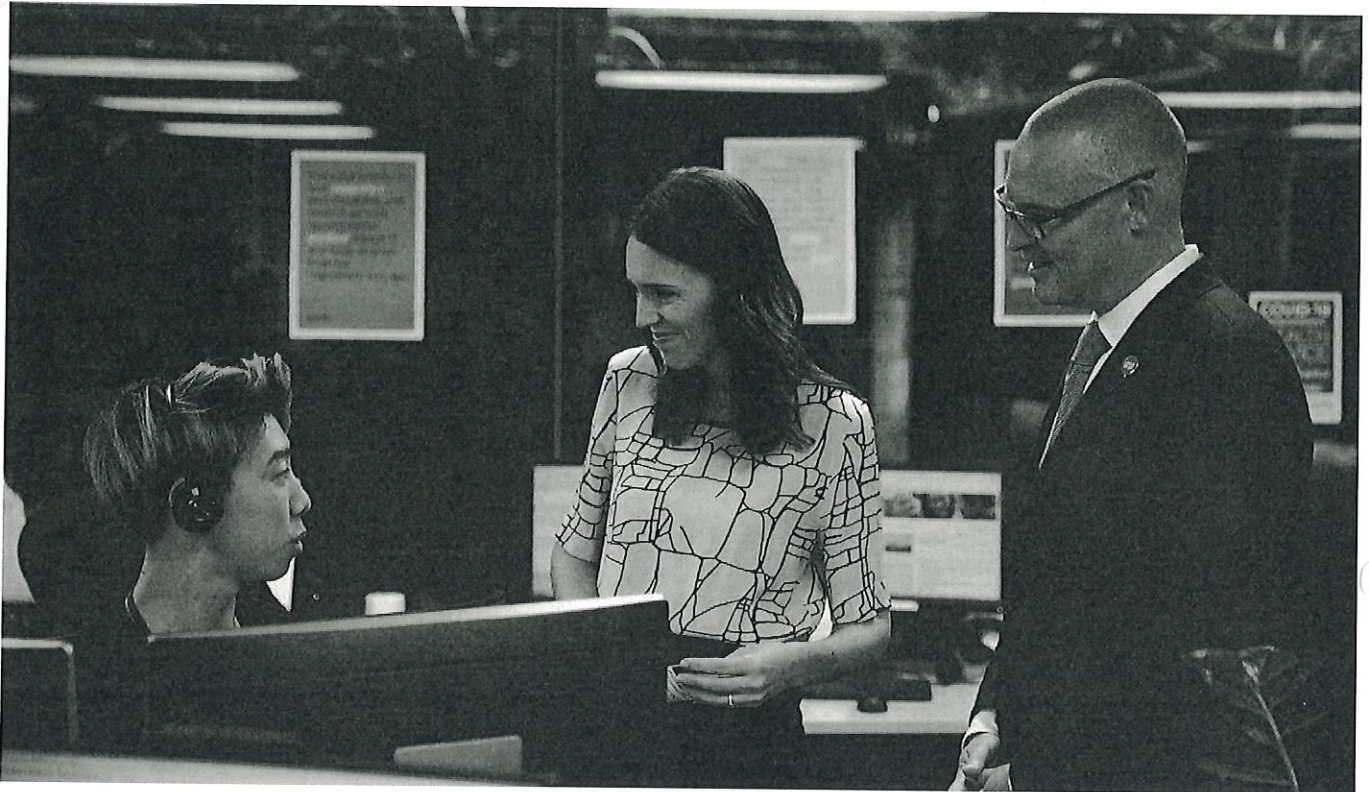
Public health officials have begun tracing the patient's other close contacts to ensure appropriate protection measures are in place.

### **Should you wear a mask?**

For most people in the community, face masks are not recommended.

However, for people with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection, the World Health Organisation says there may be benefit in wearing a face mask to reduce the spread of infection to other people.





Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Health Minister David Clark meet with staff at the Healthline office in Grafton, Auckland.  
Photo / Sylvie Whinray

Generally, masks can prevent droplets spreading from an infected patient and others inhaling droplets if they are within one metre of a coughing individual.

If people are unwell or have a job which requires them to be in close contact with people who may have Covid-19, face masks are recommended.

However, the ministry says basic hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette will have a bigger impact.

### **What are the best prevention measures?**

Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including Covid-19.

These include washing hands regularly with soap and water or cleansing with hand sanitiser; staying at home if you are sick; coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene; and cleaning surfaces regularly.

### **Which countries have recorded cases of Covid-19? How many people have been affected? How many have died?**

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Nearly 3000 people have been infected in South Korea, nearly a thousand in Italy, more than 300 in Iran, and more than 200 in Japan.



Workers disinfect subway trains against coronavirus in Iran, where more than a dozen people died from the infection.

Photo / AP

Australia has had 25 cases, and New Zealand recorded its first on Friday.

Nearly 3000 people have died worldwide with a fatality rate of about 3.45 per cent, and nearly 40,000 recovered meaning the recovery rate sits around 46.7 per cent.

Again the vast majority of deaths have been in China - just over 2800, with 34 in Iran the next worst-impacted, followed by Italy with 21 deaths and then 16 in South Korea.

#### **If you are feeling sick, what should you do?**

Anybody with specific concerns should phone Healthline's dedicated Covid-19 number 0800 358 5453 (or +64 9 358 5453 for international SIM) or contact their GP, including phoning ahead.

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14 days.

These people should self-isolate for 14 days from the date of departure or close contact, and phone Healthline to register.

The ministry is also asking people who have visited Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand and who have developed symptoms of fever, cough or shortness of breath to seek medical advice through Healthline or contact their GP, including phoning ahead of your visit.

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