Covid-19 timeline: Virus's spread across the globe

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No one knew of Covid-19 three months ago. It didn't even have a name. But now it's the hot topic as it spreads across the world.

Countries, territories or areas with reported confirmed cases of Covid-19 as of 4 March. Photo: WHO

As the number of confirmed cases in New Zealand continues to rise, travel restrictions are extended, the public is warned against panic buying and scientists across the globe are trying to develop a vaccine.

Here's a timeline on the virus so far:

31 December, 2019: Coronavirus is first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO). It is described as a pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan, China
9 January, 2019: WHO warns a cluster of 50 cases of pneumonia in Wuhan may be linked to a coronavirus (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/406989/china-pneumonia-outbreak-may-be-linked-to-new-virus-who)


21 January: The infection is reported to have spread to Beijing and Shanghai (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/407753/new-china-virus-cases-triple-as-infection-spreads-to-beijing-and-shanghai). Cases are reported to have topped 200.


25 January: Chinese New Year

29 January: NZ government announces it will try to get New Zealanders out of Wuhan (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/408383/wuhan-coronavirus-govt-to-team-up-with-australians-to-get-nzers-out-of-city) with help from Australia. China total cases at 5355, deaths reach 131. Virus reported in 15 other countries but no deaths outside China


2 February: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/408675/nz-to-close-doors-on-foreign-travellers-from-china) a two-week travel ban on foreign nationals travelling from...
or through mainland China. The epidemic in China has peaked between 23 January and 2 February, and cases begin to decline in the country (WHO)

5 February: 3700 people on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, off Yokohoma, Japan, begin a two-week quarantine after 10 people tested positive for the virus (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/408938/cruise-ship-in-quarantine-for-two-weeks-after-coronavirus-confirmed)


12 February: UN activates WHO-led Crisis Management Team


27 February: WHO reports there are more new cases of the virus outside of China than inside (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/410460/coronavirus-more-new-cases-outside-china-than-inside-who). Cases globally top 80,000

29 February: WHO says the risk of spread and impact of the coronavirus is now "very high" at a global level, the highest level of alarm, but containment is still possible.

2 March: New Zealand extends travel restrictions (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/410790/new-travel-conditions-for-people-arriving-from-coronavirus-hotspots) from Iran and China for a further seven days, while people arriving from northern Italy and South Korea are told to self-isolate.


5 March: A third case (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/410974/third-coronavirus-case-confirmed-in-new-zealand) of coronavirus is confirmed in New Zealand. The Auckland man, in his 40s, contracted the disease from a family member, having not travelled himself - the first case of local transmission in New Zealand. New Zealand is one of more than 80 countries with confirmed cases. Globally, about 3200 people have died and more than 90,000 people have been infected.

- RNZ / BBC