

COVID-19

Information sheet for travellers returning from risk areas

What is SARS-CoV-2?

Corona viruses (CoV) form a large family of viruses that can cause humans to develop various diseases, ranging from a mild cold to severe pneumonia.

How is the virus transmitted?

According to the information available to date, the virus can be transmitted from person to person by airborne droplets (sneezing, coughing, close speaking distance) or as a smear infection (poor hand hygiene). The risk of human-to-human transmission is relatively low and available evidence suggests that it is slightly higher than for influenza. In comparison, measles viruses are 5-7 times more contagious.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of an infection caused by the new type of corona virus include: increased temperature, sore throat, cough, respiratory difficulties, less frequently vomiting and diarrhoea. In severe cases the infection can lead to pneumonia, kidney failure and, in cases with additional serious pre-existing medical conditions, death. In most cases, the disease takes a mild form (symptoms of a cold).

How long is the incubation period?

Based on available information, the usual incubation period is currently estimated at 2-7 days (1-14 days at most).

For how long is a person contagious?

The length of the contagious period is estimated to last from one day before the disease becomes apparent until 2 days after the symptoms disappear. A period lasting around 10 days is only an estimation, and this question therefore remains open.

How is the disease treated?

Treatment focuses on the symptoms of the disease and aims to alleviate these symptoms, for instance with antipyretics to reduce fever. There is no vaccination.

Who is at risk?

In the first instance, those at risk include individuals who have been in close contact with someone who has contracted or died from COVID-19 (e.g. family members, medical staff, without appropriate protective equipment). The risk of infection is significantly lower for travellers arriving/returning from a risk area, where they may unknowingly have been in contact with someone who has fallen ill with COVID-19.

How can you protect others?

If you have returned from a risk area within the past 14 days, telephone the Health Department of your local district authority. We ask you to provide your contact details voluntarily, if your job involves frequent contact with the public, if you work in a hospital, or a community facility (e.g. pre-school), to discuss the next steps.

As a general rule, for a period of 14 days after entering the country you should

- voluntarily and significantly reduce all your social contacts
- not attend any events or visit places of assembly or community facilities such as pre-schools
- not use public transport.

You should also monitor your state of health for the first 14 days after your return:

- take your temperature twice a day
- pay special attention to respiratory symptoms (sore throat, cough, shortness of breath)
- keep a list of all those individuals with whom you have a conversation lasting around/above 15 minutes. (Follow the link for an example (in German) of how to keep a record and for other information:

https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Kontaktperson/Management.html)

Please immediately telephone the health hotline on 1450 or your family practitioner, if you

- start to feel ill
- develop symptoms such as a cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, other respiratory symptoms, fever or flu-like symptoms, but also if you experience vomiting and diarrhoea
- if you require medical assistance for any other reason.

Please make sure to tell the telephone operator which risk area you have visited in the past 14 days. Diagnostic confirmation will subsequently follow a specific route.

Further guidance to help protect the people in your vicinity within the 14-day period:

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using plenty of soap and water.
- If possible, use single-use towels or a separate towel that is reserved for your use only.
- Follow hygiene recommendations when sneezing and/or coughing. Cough or sneeze into a single-use tissue (which must be disposed of properly immediately afterwards) or into the crook of your arm.
- It is important to wash your hands whenever you sneeze and/or cough and after each visit to the toilet; if necessary, disinfect hands afterwards. Clean the toilet and any handles and fittings in your home with commercially available cleaning agents on a daily basis.
- Keep a speaking distance of 2 metres.
- If possible, keep to separate rooms if you live together with other people. In the case of direct contact, you can protect your surroundings by wearing a protective mask covering the mouth and nose.

These measures serve to reduce the risk of this disease spreading.

Additional information:

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Gesundheit/Uebertragbare-Krankheiten/Infektionskrankheiten-A-Z/Neuartiges-Coronavirus.html> (in German)

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/en/Coronavirus/FAQ-Coronavirus.html> (FAQ in English)

AGES corona virus hotline: 0800 555 621 – around the clock