

**Center for Policy, Planning and Evaluation  
Division of Epidemiology–Disease Surveillance and Investigation**

**January 10, 2020**

**Health Alert Notice for District of Columbia Health Care Providers  
Outbreak of Pneumonia of Unknown Etiology (PUE) in Wuhan, China**

**SUMMARY**

We would like to notify you of a recent [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Health Advisory](#) released on January 8, 2020. The CDC is closely monitoring a reported cluster of pneumonia of unknown etiology (PUE) with possible epidemiologic links to a large wholesale fish and live animal market in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. An outbreak investigation by local officials is ongoing in China. Currently, there are no known U.S. cases nor have cases been reported in countries other than China. CDC has established an Incident Management Structure to optimize domestic and international coordination if additional public health actions are required. This Health Alert Notice provides situational awareness about this outbreak and reinforces the importance of asking patients about recent travel history. Health care providers should immediately notify the District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) of any patients with severe respiratory disease who report recent travel to Wuhan City, China.

**BACKGROUND**

Wuhan City is a major transportation hub about 700 miles south of Beijing with a population of more than 11 million people. According to a report from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, as of January 5, 2020, the national authorities in China have reported 59 patients with PUE. The patients had symptom onset dates from December 12-29, 2019. Patients involved in the cluster reportedly have had fever, dyspnea, and bilateral lung infiltrates on chest radiograph. Of the 59 cases, seven are critically ill, and the remaining patients are in stable condition. No deaths or cases of human-to-human transmission have been reported.

Reports indicate that some of the patients were vendors at the Wuhan South China Seafood City (South China Seafood Wholesale Market) where, in addition to seafood, chickens, bats, marmots, and other wild animals are sold, suggesting a possible zoonotic origin to the outbreak. The market has been closed for cleaning and disinfection. Local authorities have reported negative laboratory test results for seasonal influenza, avian influenza, adenovirus, severe acute respiratory syndrome-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV), and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) among patients associated with this cluster. Additional laboratory testing is ongoing to determine the source of the outbreak. Health authorities are monitoring more than 150 contacts of patients for illness.

CDC has issued a level 1 travel notice (“practice usual precautions”) for this destination. (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/pneumonia-china>).

On January 5, 2020, WHO posted an update on this situation, including an early risk assessment, which is available at: <https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/>

## **DC Health Recommendations for Health Care Providers**

### **Immediate notification to DC Health**

- Providers should consider PUE for patients with severe respiratory symptoms who traveled to Wuhan since December 1, 2019, who became ill within two weeks of returning, and who do not have another known diagnosis that would explain their illness.
- Providers should notify their infection control personnel and then contact DC Health immediately by calling at 202-442-9370 (during business hours) or 844-493-2652 (after business hours) or by sending an email to [doh.epi@dc.gov](mailto:doh.epi@dc.gov)

### **Specimen Collection Guidelines**

- Multiple respiratory tract specimens should be collected from persons with infections suspected to be associated with this cluster, including nasopharyngeal, nasal, and throat swabs.
- Patients with severe respiratory disease also should have lower respiratory tract specimens collected, if possible.
- Consider saving urine, stool, serum, and respiratory pathology specimens if available.

### **Infection Control Recommendations**

- Although the etiology and mode of transmission are unknown, CDC currently recommends the following precautions for symptomatic patients with a history of travel to Wuhan City:
  - Patients should be asked to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified
  - Patients should be evaluated in a private room with the door closed.
  - Personnel entering the room to evaluate the patient should use contact precautions and wear an N95 disposable face piece respirator.
  - For patients admitted for inpatient care, contact and airborne isolation precautions are recommended in addition to standard precautions until further information becomes available.

For additional information see: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html> .

**Please contact the DC Health Division of Epidemiology–Disease Surveillance and Investigation at:**  
**Phone: 202-442-9370 (8:15am-4:45pm) | 844-493-2652 (after-hours calls)**  
**Fax: 202-442-8060 | Email: [doh.epi@dc.gov](mailto:doh.epi@dc.gov)**