

Patient in Japan confirmed as having new virus from China

16 January 2020, by Mari Yamaguchi



Pedestrians wear protective masks as they walk through a shopping district in Tokyo Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020. Japan's government said Thursday a man treated for pneumonia after returning from China has tested positive for the new coronavirus identified as a possible cause of an outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Japan's government said Thursday a man treated for pneumonia after returning from China has tested positive for the new coronavirus identified as a possible cause of an outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

The man developed a fever and cough on Jan. 3 while in Wuhan, returned to Japan on Jan. 6, and was hospitalized four days later as the symptoms persisted, with his X-ray image showing signs of pneumonia, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said.

Tests conducted Tuesday found the same coronavirus as had been detected in other patients in the Wuhan outbreak, the ministry said.

The man has since been released from the hospital after his condition improved. He was only

identified as a man in his 30s in Kanagawa prefecture, west of Tokyo, and Kyodo News agency said he is Chinese. His family and medical staff who treated him have not been sickened.

Officials in Wuhan said last weekend 41 people had pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus and a 61-year-old man had died—China's first known death from the virus. The World Health Organization also has said it was consulting with Thai and Chinese health authorities after a case was reported in Thailand of a Chinese traveler.

Other Asian countries have also taken precautions.

In Indonesia, thermal imaging equipment to detect abnormal body temperatures was installed at airports and seaports, the health ministry said. It said authorities will interview travelers, especially from China and Hong Kong, with temperatures higher than 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit), followed by a health check.

Indonesia has not reported any cases of the new virus. It was the world's hot spot for avian influenza, both in birds and in humans, which peaked in 2006 and 2007 with 146 human deaths reported to the World Health Organization.

Eiji Hinoshita, an official at Japan's health ministry, told reporters that the man treated there said he did not go to the fish market in Wuhan linked to the pneumonia outbreak, but had "close contact" with at least one person with pneumonia symptoms at a place where he stayed during the visit. Ministry officials are checking the patient's activities and people he contacted in China and Japan.

The news came just ahead of the lunar new year, when many Chinese travel. Japan's health ministry is urging those visiting or returning from Wuhan to wear masks and promptly seek medical treatment if they have coughs and fever. But officials said the virus is not considered highly contagious.

China has sought to play down speculation that it could be a reappearance of the SARS epidemic, which killed hundreds in 2002 and 2003.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some of which cause the common cold. Others found in bats, camels and other animals have evolved to cause more severe illnesses.

Common symptoms include a runny nose, headache, cough and fever. Shortness of breath, chills and body aches are associated with more dangerous kinds of coronaviruses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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