

Italian clusters indicate risk for rapid COVID-19 transmission

ECDC ECDC 24 Feb 2020

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Takeaway

Current ECDC Threat Assessment Brief emphasizes that while COVID-19 risk for the EU/EEA and the UK is low to moderate, risk for case clusters observed in Italy is high.

At this writing, Italian authorities confirmed 200 cases, with 5 deaths.

Why this matters

Case clusters highlight likelihood for rapid, local COVID-19 transmission without direct evidence for first-generation transmission.

Experts recommend testing symptomatic and asymptomatic patients with recent travel to affected Italian municipalities and/or Wuhan as soon as possible.

Consult [WHO](#) and [ECDC](#) guidance.

Key points

Transmission appears to have occurred locally; Italian authorities are conducting confirmatory testing and extensive contact tracing. Strict public health measures, including travel bans, suspension of public events, institution closures, and quarantine and surveillance

have been implemented.

ECDC warns of the potential effect of similar case clusters in the EU/EEA and UK, especially for vulnerable elderly populations with comorbidities.

Significantly strained health care and hospital resources are likely.

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Lancet Respiratory Medicine

observational study confirms:

High mortality rates among critically ill patients with likely post-ICU admission survival of 1-2 weeks.

Older patients with comorbidities and acute respiratory distress syndrome have increased mortality risk.

Threat assessment brief: Outbreak of novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situation in Italy. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. February 23, 2020.

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