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Caribbean Governments Prepare for New, Deadly Strain of Coronavirus

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Governments around the Caribbean are taking precautionary measures for the deadly new strain of coronavirus, which appears to have been originated in China and has spread outside of the country.

The virus has been linked to respiratory tract infections in China and according to the World Health Organization, current evidence suggests that person-to-person transmission is limited.

Even so, Caribbean governments — from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and St. Lucia, among others — are taking precautionary measures in case the virus arrives at their shores.

St. Lucia

The St. Lucia Department of Health and Wellness maintains communication with the country's regional partners and will continue to provide the public with information as it becomes available. In the interim, the public is asked to continue practicing the standard recommendations to prevent the spread of infection.

These include: regular hand washing with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer where soap and water is not available; cover mouth and nose with disposable tissues or clothing when coughing and sneezing; avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing; seek medical attention and share your travel history with your health care provider if you have symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness either during or after travel.

Barbados

Barbados's Minister of Health and Wellness, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Bostic said the country already had a number of protocols in place which had been developed out of its experience with other potential public health threats, such as Ebola and SARS, and added that the ministry would do all in its power to remain on top of the current situation.

Col. Bostic urged persons travelling from Barbados to the affected regions to protect themselves by practising frequent hand washing and avoiding close contact with persons suffering from acute respiratory infections. Those who have recently travelled and returned home with symptoms are advised to seek immediate medical attention.

Jamaica

In a release issued Monday, the Jamaica Ministry of Health and Wellness said it aware of the virus and while no cases had been reported in Jamaica, the government was on high alert.

“Jamaica has a robust surveillance system already in place to detect emerging diseases. The Ministry wishes to reiterate that preparedness activities will continue for the prevention and containment of this disease,” said Acting Chief Medical Officer, Dr Karen Webster Kerr. “These activities include surveillance, early detection, and rapid isolation and treatment of all cases.”