

### 5 January 2025 | Press Release and Public Health Advisory: Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) Awareness, Preparedness and Prevention

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) is committed to safeguarding the health of all Nigerians. In response to recent reports of increased Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) activity in China and other affected regions, as well as growing public interest in the matter, the NCDC in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is closely monitoring global developments. We aim to provide timely, accurate information and guidance to keep the Nigerian public informed and prepared.

#### Global situation update.

It is important to note that the rumor circulating about the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring HMPV a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) is false and should be disregarded. The WHO has not made such a declaration. Recent reports indicate a significant rise in Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases in China, as well as increased respiratory infections linked to HMPV in countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), France, and Germany, particularly during the winter season. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has highlighted a notable rise in hospital admissions due to HMPV-related complications, especially among children under five and older adults in care homes. This trend emphasizes the need for heightened preparedness and vigilance.

#### Current Situation in Nigeria

Nigeria operates a National Influenza Sentinel Surveillance (NISS) system, comprising sentinel sites distributed across the six geopolitical zones of the country. These sites, which include tertiary and secondary health facilities, monitor Influenza-like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI). As of January 6, 2025, data from this surveillance system does not indicate any unusual increase in respiratory infections, including those caused by Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). However, given the global trends in HMPV cases, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) is proactively implementing measures to strengthen the country's preparedness and response capacity.

## NCDC Preparedness Measures

The NCDC is closely monitoring the situation and has implemented the following actions to ensure public health safety:

1. **Dynamic Risk Assessment:** On January 6, 2025, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDC), and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), conducted a dynamic risk assessment for Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). The assessment classified the risk of HMPV for Nigeria as moderate. This evaluation will inform and guide preparedness efforts, decision-making, and response strategies to mitigate potential impacts.
2. **Public Health Advisory:** Issued this advisory to provide Nigerians with up-to-date information on preparedness actions and preventive measures.
3. **Point of Entry (POE):** The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), in collaboration with Port Health Authorities, is taking proactive steps to ensure robust preparedness at all international points of entry (PoEs) in response to the dynamic risk assessment for Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). These measures are designed to mitigate the potential risk of HMPV transmission through international travel. Key actions include:
  - Conducting a comprehensive situation analysis at all international PoEs to assess current readiness levels.
  - An Entry Implementation Protocol on HMPV, approved by the Honourable Minister of Health and Social Welfare, is being developed and will be distributed to all points of entry to guide response activities.
  - In addition, quarantine facilities are being identified and prepared to manage any suspected or confirmed cases if required.
  - Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) materials are being deployed to PoEs to ensure adherence to hygiene and safety protocols.
  - Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials are being developed and distributed to raise awareness and provide clear guidelines for frontline staff and travelers at PoEs.
4. **Enhanced Surveillance and Laboratory Diagnosis:** The National Influenza Sentinel Surveillance (NISS) sites across the six geopolitical zones monitor Influenza-like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI). This platform, which is already testing for COVID-19, will now also start testing for HMPV. Provisions will be made to increase the number of tests conducted.

Additionally, laboratories in states with international airports will be supported to enable them to test for HMPV.

- 5. Infection Prevention and Control (IPC):** Advisories have been issued to hospitals nationwide on enhanced IPC practices, including proper hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette. All health facilities are required to identify an appropriate isolation room where cases can be quickly isolated while receiving care.
- 6. Case Management Preparedness:** Collaborating with state governments and healthcare facilities to provide training for healthcare workers to ensure adequate case management teams are in place and ready to respond if needed. This will ensure that healthcare workers are able to provide appropriate care and maintain a high index of suspicion. Supportive care and an emphasis on a high index of suspicion are crucial. We are requesting state governments to activate their treatment centers or isolation centers to ensure they are prepared to manage cases appropriately.
- 7. Stockpiling of Medical Countermeasures:** Relevant materials such as PPEs (face masks, hand gloves, hand hygiene supplies, and other essential IPC items) have been stockpiled for rapid deployment if required. Additionally, laboratory consumables, reagents, and other necessary supplies have also been stockpiled to ensure readiness.

## **PUBLIC ADVISORY**

### **What is HMPV?**

Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a respiratory virus that can cause illnesses ranging from mild cold-like symptoms to severe respiratory infections, particularly in:

- Young children
- Older adults
- Individuals with weakened immune systems

There is no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine for HMPV. Supportive care, such as rest, hydration, and fever management, remains the primary approach to recovery.

### **Symptoms**

- Cough
- Fever
- Nasal congestion
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Bronchitis or pneumonia (in vulnerable populations such as very young children, older people, patients with low immunity such and those on cancer treatment, uncontrolled diabetes etc).

The incubation period is 3-5 days after exposure, and infections typically resolve within 2-5 days with supportive care. However, high-risk populations may experience complications.

## Transmission

HMPV spreads through:

- Respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact (e.g., touching or shaking hands)
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face  
Overcrowding and poor ventilation can lead to increased transmission, e.g., in congregate settings such as correctional centers and poorly managed IDPs.

## Preventive Measures

To reduce the risk of HMPV infection, the public is advised to follow these preventive steps:

### For the General Public:

- **Hand Hygiene:** Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- **Respiratory Etiquette:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing. Cover your mouth and nose with face mask if you are experiencing flu like symptoms.
- **Avoid Close Contact:** Maintain distance from individuals showing symptoms of respiratory illness.
- **Avoid overcrowded places.**
- **Disinfect Surfaces:** Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- **Self-Isolation:** Stay home if experiencing symptoms to prevent spreading the virus. As is correct practice and seek medical care from appropriate sources.

### Protecting Vulnerable Groups:

- Young children, older adults, and individuals with underlying health conditions such as people with chronic diseases such as diabetes, on cancer treatment, immunocompromised patients or those with low immunity should seek prompt medical attention if experiencing severe symptoms.

## Healthcare Guidance

### For Healthcare Workers:

- Reinforce Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures in healthcare facilities.
- Enhance surveillance for acute respiratory infections and report unusual increases to the relevant authorities. Index of suspicion and enhanced
- Use appropriate PPE when attending to patients with respiratory symptoms.
- Educate patients on preventive measures and when to seek emergency medical care.
- Provide symptomatic care and promptly refer severe cases to specialist facilities.

## **Conclusion**

The NCDC remains dedicated to protecting the health of Nigerians through continuous surveillance and prompt response to infectious diseases. We urge the public to adhere to the preventive measures outlined above and to seek medical attention if experiencing symptoms consistent with HMPV infection.

We also emphasize the importance of relying on verified information from the NCDC and WHO. For emergencies, please contact the NCDC's toll-free line at 6232 or email us at [info@ncdc.gov.ng](mailto:info@ncdc.gov.ng). Follow us on our verified social media platforms for timely updates.

Together, we can protect our communities from respiratory infections and ensure a healthier Nigeria.

## **About NCDC**

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) is the country's national public health institute, with the mandate to lead the preparedness, detection, and response to public health emergencies. The Bill for an Act to establish NCDC was signed into law in November 2018 by President Muhammadu Buhari. The mission of the NCDC is 'To protect the health of Nigerians through evidence-based prevention, integrated disease surveillance and response, using a One Health approach, guided by research, and led by a skilled workforce.

## **Contact**

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## **Signed:**

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