

Basic Policies for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control
(Tentative translation)

February 25, 2020

Decisions by the Headquarters for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control

1. Current situation and purpose of the Basic Policies

A number of quarantine measures have been taken against the novel coronavirus disease, but patients with no apparent routes of transmission have been reported sporadically in several regions of Japan, and in some regions, small clusters of patients have been confirmed. Nevertheless, at this time, there are no regions where a large-scale spread of the infection has been identified.

In order to end this epidemic as soon as possible, it is extremely important to prevent one cluster from developing another cluster, and the comprehensive measures must be taken. It is also significantly important to curtail the rate of increase in patients as much as possible through these preventative measures, in order to control the epidemic in Japan.

Moreover, this is also the time to establish and improve arrangements including the health system to deliver necessary medical care especially for the severe patients, to prepare for the possible increase of patients in Japan.

In order to accurately understand the current situations related to the novel coronavirus disease, and to collectively implement the infection control measures with the national and regional governments, medical professionals, private sectors, and all citizens, this document presents the comprehensive Basic Policies to control the infection, laying out the measures currently being taken and the perspectives of possible future measures to be taken to respond to future development.

This is an extremely critical time for minimizing future negative impact on health in Japan. Given the characteristics of the novel

coronavirus disease described in item 2 below, we ask all the people in Japan to refrain from seeking medical care without appropriate consultation due to the anxiety of potential infection, and avoid the environments with high risk of infection. Moreover, we request the people to wash their hands and to cover their mouth when coughing, refrain from going out when they have symptoms, and wear masks when they need to go out.

2. Current knowledge of the novel coronavirus disease

- The routes of transmission are generally through droplets and contacts. It is not thought to be caused by airborne infections.
In addition, under certain circumstances, such as when talking to many people at a short distance in confined spaces, there is the risk of spreading the infection even without coughing or sneezing.
- Infectivity varies from case to case. There have been suspected cases which spread the infection to many people. Meanwhile, there are many cases where the virus did not transmit to those surrounding the infected person.
- Often, fevers or respiratory symptoms may persist for around one week, and many patients complain of strong fatigue. It has been reported that the period of hospitalization tends to be longer than that of seasonal influenza.
- Those infected often present only mild symptoms, which will heal in many cases. The severity of the novel coronavirus disease is not as great as infectious diseases with extremely high mortality rates, but it does have the higher risk than seasonal influenza. The risks of developing severe symptoms are particularly high among the elderly and patients with underlying diseases.
- Unlike influenza, no effective antiviral drug has been developed, therefore the treatment is primarily conservative treatment. Additionally, there are currently no rapid test kits.

- Meanwhile, regarding treatment methods, it is possible that medications for other viruses may be effective.

3. Objectives of countermeasures at this moment

- The primary aim is to end the epidemic in its early stages through measures to prevent the spread of infection while suppressing the rate of increase in patients as much as possible, and minimizing the scale of the epidemic.
- Make every possible effort to minimize the incidence of severe cases.
- Minimize the impact on society and economy.

4. Key points of the Basic Policies for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control

(1) Information sharing with the people, private sectors, and regions

a) Provide accurate and easy-to-understand information and call on the people to encourage calm responses.

- Provide accurate information that includes clinical information and the situations of the outbreak
- Take general infection prevention measures such as hand washing and covering their mouth when coughing
- Urge those with fever or other flu-like symptoms to take off from work or school and refrain from going out
- Raise awareness that seeking medical care without appropriate consultation due to the anxiety about potential infection may end up increasing the risk of infection, etc.

b) Urge companies to encourage employees and other personnel to take leave if they have fever or other flu-like symptoms, and promote teleworking and staggering commuting hours, in order to reduce the opportunities for contact with patients and infected persons.

- c) Request, based on the opinions of the experts meeting, communities and companies to re-examine the necessity of hosting public events from the viewpoint of infection control, taking into account the spread of infection, and the conditions of venue, while the nationwide voluntary restraint shall not be requested at this time.
- d) Provide appropriate information and support to Japanese who are staying in countries where the infection is spreading.
- e) Provide appropriate and prompt information to the public, foreign governments and foreign tourists, to prevent the spread of infection in Japan, and to prevent rumors.

(2) Understanding the situation of infection in Japan (surveillance (onset trend survey))

A) Measures being taken

- a) Identify suspected patients based on notification from physicians based on the Infectious Diseases Control Law, and conduct PCR tests when the physician deems necessary.

Identify close contacts of confirmed patients through active epidemiology surveys, in accordance with the Infectious Diseases Control Law.

- b) Improve laboratory functions at the institutions concerned such as local public health institutes (including private testing institutes).
- c) Ensure appropriate information sharing including those related to patients between prefectural departments of public health and education.

B) Measures to be taken

- Establish the surveillance system to grasp the epidemic situation in Japan, while switching to use of PCR test for the confirmation of diagnosis necessary to treat pneumonia patients who require hospitalization, in communities where the number of patients continues to increase.

(3) Measures to control the infection

A) Measures being taken

a) Take the following measures in accordance with the Infectious Diseases Control Law if a patient is identified by notification of a physician or other means: the active epidemiology survey to be conducted by the public health center; and close contacts to be monitored for their health conditions and requested to refrain from going out.

The local government shall use active epidemiology surveys to identify a cluster based on individual patient outbreaks in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and experts, and request the necessary measures including closure of the related facilities and voluntary restraint of events if there is a possibility that such a cluster exists.

b) Take general infection prevention measures in facilities such as facilities for the elderly.

c) Take general infection prevention measures at public transportation facilities, roadside stations, and other facilities where a large number of people gather.

B) Measures to be taken

a) In communities where the number of patients continues to increase.;

- Switch to broader calls for refraining from going out, while reducing the scale of active epidemiology surveys and health observations on close contacts.
- Continue and strengthen the responses to clusters of patients, depending on the situation in the community.

b) Prefectural governments, etc., shall request schools and other institutions to take appropriate measures including presentation of infection control policies at their facilities and temporary closures of schools.

(4)Health system to deliver medical care (consultation centers, outpatient, and hospitalization)

A) Measures being taken

a) Establish and operate 24-hour Call Centers for Japanese Returnees and Potential Contacts who suspect for their infection with the novel coronavirus.

b) Encourage people to contact the Call Center for Japanese Returnees and Potential Contacts, which refer suspected patients to outpatient facilities from the viewpoint of accurately grasping the situations of outbreak and preventing the further spread, as seeking medical care without consulting due to the anxiety from potential infection may lead to increased risk of infection.

c) Report a suspected case of the novel coronavirus disease found at the outpatient facility for Japanese returnees and potential contacts in accordance with the Infectious Diseases Control Law, and conduct the PCR test. As appropriate, follow hospitalization procedures in accordance with the Infectious Diseases Control Law.

d) Secure beds and mechanical ventilators in medical institutions in preparation for the potential increase of patients.

e) Provide health professionals with appropriate information on treatment while also engaging in development of treatment, drugs, vaccines, and rapid diagnostic test kits.

B) Measures to be taken

a) Accept suspected patients of the novel coronavirus infection at outpatient facilities of general medical institutions after fully implementing the infection control measures including separating treatment hours and the flow of patients, in communities where the number of patients have significantly increased. (Local communities should discuss and consider in advance the medical institutions that do not accept the suspected cases of the novel coronavirus infection (i.e.: dialysis and obstetric medical institutions, etc.)). At the same time,

outpatient care for Japanese returnees and potential contacts is to be gradually reduced starting from the designated medical institutions for infectious diseases, which are expected to receive a large number of severe cases.

Patients with mild flu-like symptoms should stay at home unless otherwise specified, and seek medical care after consulting the call center or a family doctor, if their conditions change. The elderly and those with underlying diseases are encouraged to seek appropriate medical care at the early stage, given their vulnerability to the infection.

Establish the system in advance where elderly persons with no flu-like symptoms, or persons with underlying diseases who are receiving ongoing treatment and medication, can receive necessary care such as their prescriptions without visiting medical institutions as much as possible, including by phone, from the view of infection control.

b) Establish a system for providing appropriate hospitalized medical care, including by securing beds and mechanical ventilations, and assigning roles to medical institutions in the community (i.e., arrangement of medical institutions that give priority to severe cases requiring intensive care, etc.), considering the possibility of further increases in patients and the characteristics of the novel coronavirus disease.

c) Strengthen infection control measures and secure essential goods for controlling the infection in medical institutions.

d) Take general infection control measures thoroughly to prevent the infection from spreading in the facilities for the elderly if there is a suspected case of the novel coronavirus infection, while ensuring the smooth transition to hospitalized medical care for those with the high risk.

(5) Border control measures

Based on the viewpoint of preventing a sudden inflows of infected persons into Japan, current entry restrictions and the

recommendation for travel suspension will remain in effect.

Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of securing medical resources in Japan, quarantine operations will be shifted, according to measures to prevent the spread of infection in Japan and systems for providing medical care.

(6)Others

- a) Request related businesses to ramp up production and ensure the smooth supply of masks, disinfectants, etc.
- b) Call on consumers and businesses to remain calm and refrain from overstocking, to ensure there are enough masks and other goods necessary for the people.
- c) Maintain close international cooperation and gather information on how the WHO and other countries are responding to the situation. Actively share the knowledge obtained in Japan with the WHO and related institutions, and use it for future countermeasures.
- d) Take necessary measures for children who have temporarily returned from China, including supporting their acceptance and preventing bullying at schools.
- e) Act with due consideration to the human rights of patients and those involved in the infection control activities.
- f) Prevent problems at airports, ports, medical institutes, etc., by exercising vigilance as necessary.
- g) Prevent various crimes that capitalize on chaos while strengthening the enforcement.

5. Way forward

Going forward, based on these Basic Policies, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and other ministries and agencies will collaborate sequentially to give details for each measure, such as issuing necessary notifications to relevant persons, etc., regarding matters under their jurisdiction in view of anticipated future.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will first indicate the

timing to switch each measure for each region, and then the local government will make a decision while consulting with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and will take the optimal measure according to the actual situation in the region. Measures are to be implemented in coordination with the local governments and other related persons.

If future development or new scientific knowledge necessitates the revisions to these Basic Policies, they will be updated and substantiated each time in the Headquarters for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control, taking into account discussions by meeting of experts.