

Drugmaker AstraZeneca warns on coronavirus impact

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British pharmaceuticals group AstraZeneca on Friday warned that the coronavirus epidemic would hit its performance this year in key market China.

The London-listed drugmaker said the COVID-19 [outbreak](#)—otherwise known as novel coronavirus—would have an "unfavourable impact" on the company and last for several months.

The group nevertheless forecast that total sales would rise by about ten percent in 2020 and earnings-per-share would increase by about 15 percent.

"All guidance assumes an unfavourable impact from China lasting up to a few months as a result of the recent novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak," the group said in a results statement .

"The company will monitor closely the development of the [epidemic](#) and anticipates providing an update at the time of the first-quarter 2020 results."

The death toll from China's virus epidemic neared 1,400 on Friday, while nearly 64,000 people are now recorded as having fallen ill from the outbreak.

"Last year was a good one for AstraZeneca, having twice raised sales guidance," said AJ Bell analyst Russ Mould, adding that the 2019

earnings were "a fairly decent set of full year results".

But he added: "Unfortunately the coronavirus threatens to disrupt earnings in China, one of its key markets.

"It is being cautious and assuming there will be an impact to earnings, which is the right thing to do," Mould said.

China is AstraZeneca's second largest [market](#) after the United States.

The company's sales in China alone soared by 29 percent in 2019 to \$4.9 billion (4.5 billion euros), it noted Friday.

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