

Dear Colleagues

We encourage you to familiarise yourself with the information contained in this booklet.

No country is immune to the spread of the Novel Coronavirus – officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This outbreak has been declared a global public health emergency. Here is all you need to know to stay healthy.

What makes COVID-19 so tricky to deal with?

“There is limited information available about its clinical features and the severity of disease it causes,” says **Dr Noluthando Nematswerani**, Discovery Health's Head of the Centre for Clinical Excellence. “Recent data shows that more than 80% of people infected with COVID-19 have mild disease and recover. In about 5% of cases patients have critical disease and in 2% of cases the virus causes a fatal respiratory illness. The risk of death increases the older a person is. While, scientists scramble to develop a vaccine for COVID-19, international efforts are concentrated on early detection and quarantining of infected patients.”

How Does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads very quickly through the air:

- ☐ after coughing or sneezing people could catch COVID-19 if they are standing within one meter of a person who has the illness, by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by the ill person;
- ☐ close personal contact, such as when shaking hands or touching others;
- ☐ touching an object or surface on which the virus is found (after an ill person coughs or exhales close to these objects or surfaces such as desks, tables or telephones), then - **before washing your hands - touching your mouth, your nose, or your eyes.**

People who contract the Novel Coronavirus may take anywhere from **one to 14 days to develop symptoms**. There is no medication available to combat the virus during the asymptomatic phase.

Symptoms of 2019 Novel Coronavirus infection include:

- ☐ Fever
- ☐ Cough
- ☐ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

What preventative measure can you take and why?

Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why?

Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

Maintain social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why?

When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why?

Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why?

Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately.

Detailed Preventative Measures

- ☐ **Wash your hands often**, especially after direct contact with people who are ill, or after being in environments where sick people are cared for, like hospitals. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds - even if they are not visibly dirty.
- ☐ **Avoid close contact** with people who have acute respiratory tract infections
- ☐ **Avoid touching the eyes**, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- ☐ **Practice cough etiquette** - when you cough, maintain your distance from others. Cover your mouth and nose with clothing, or with a flexed elbow or a tissue (discard it immediately) and wash your hands immediately afterwards
- ☐ Avoid **spitting** in public
- ☐ **Clean and disinfect** frequently-touched objects and surfaces
- ☐ Avoid **eating raw or undercooked animal products**.
- ☐ Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid cross-contamination with other uncooked foods. Use different cutting boards and knives for raw meat and other foods. **Wash your hands between handling raw food** – especially meat – and any other food.

How should you stay healthy while travelling?

- ☐ Frequently **clean your hands with soap and water** or alcohol-based hand rub
- ☐ **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands while travelling, especially when using public transport
- ☐ If you choose to wear a **face mask** be sure to cover your mouth and nose and avoid touching the mask once it's on.
- ☐ Immediately **discard single-used masks** after each use and wash your hands after removing the mask.
- ☐ **Avoid close contact** with people suffering from fever and cough.
- ☐ Eat only **well-cooked food**.
- ☐ Avoid contact with **sick animals**.
- ☐ It's important to **avoid travel** if you have **a fever and cough**. If you become sick while travelling on an airplane or using public transport, inform the personnel and seek medical care early. When you seek medical attention remember to share your travel history with your healthcare provider.
- ☐ Avoid **markets where live animals are sold**. If you do visit animal markets in areas currently experiencing cases of Novel Coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Avoid contact with stray animals, waste and fluids in roads and markets.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing:

- ☐ seek medical care immediately
- ☐ Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers.
- ☐ **Why?** Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

Sources:

- *Discovery Health*
- *World Health Organisation*