

Lausanne, February 28, 2020

Information on Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV).

Transmission:

Coronavirus likely spreads from an infected person's respiratory secretions/droplets that land on objects and surfaces around the infected person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is advised to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick with coughing symptoms and why the infected person is to wear a mask to limit the spread of droplets.

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air.

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment). If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Older people, and those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes) appear to be more vulnerable.

Use of Masks:

Use of masks cannot protect against the coronavirus when used alone but must be combined with hand hygiene and other preventative measures. If you choose to wear a mask it must be applied and discarded properly. (www.who.int) otherwise instead of protecting you the mask becomes a **source of infection for you**.

People with NO respiratory symptoms, such as cough, do not need to wear a medical mask. WHO recommends the use of masks for people who have symptoms of COVID-19 and for those caring for individuals who have symptoms, such as cough and fever. The use of masks is crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone ill (at home or in a health care facility).

WHO advises rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and misuse of masks.

Signs and symptoms:

Illness associated with the new coronavirus, named 2019-nCoV, have respiratory symptoms that include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing

If you become ill, please wear a mask and you must isolate yourself from others until you are medically screened. Do not visit doctor's office personally and just inform your team leader of your symptoms so you can be screened according to host country's public health prepared infection prevention procedures by the host medical team and have care provided. You should also tell your medical provider if you have had close contact with a sick person or had another high-risk exposure.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against the coronavirus infection, do the same things you do to avoid the common cold:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; especially after sneezing, coughing, or going to the washroom, before eating or handling any food.
2. Keep your hands and fingers away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Avoid close contact (1 meter) with people who are coughing and infected.
4. Cough or sneeze into your bent forearm or tissue which is discarded immediately into a closed container.

Diagnosis:

Your healthcare provider will follow the protocol of the country you are in and may order laboratory tests on respiratory specimens and serum (part of your blood) to detect human coronaviruses.

Treatments include taking care of yourself and over-the-counter (OTC) medication:

1. Stay home if you feel unwell. (self-isolate) If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
2. Rest and avoid overexertion.
3. Drink enough water.
4. Avoid smoking and smoky areas.
5. Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to reduce pain and fever.