



COVID-19 OUTBREAK: INFORMATION FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses that cause diseases ranging from the common cold to the more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Although the current outbreak of COVID-19 is still being investigated, the virus appears to be moderately infectious and can be passed from human to human, primarily by droplet spread just like other respiratory viruses. While many cases will manifest as a mild illness, a small percentage progress to a more severe illness and pneumonia. For the latest situation update on the outbreak, see <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

PREVENTION AND GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

At present, influenza presents more risk to meeting attendees than COVID-19. The same guidance for influenza or any of the respiratory viruses also applies to COVID-19. The following are key prevention tips for you to pay attention to:

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses

- Avoid close contact (within 1 meter/3 feet) with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – this is one of the most effective measures available.
- Note that according to WHO, there is no evidence that individuals who are well and free from respiratory symptoms will benefit from wearing a mask.

2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell

- Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or other respiratory symptoms.
- If you are unwell, inform the meeting organizer and arrange to get an assessment from a healthcare provider. It is best if you call the healthcare provider before visiting to inform them of your condition.
- Maintain your distance from others – at least 1 m / 3 feet.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of it after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, and during exposure to high traffic public areas.

HEALTH CARE IF YOU ARE UNWELL

For respiratory illness: If you are unwell with fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms, you are most likely to have a more common illness – the common cold or even influenza – not COVID-19. Seek medical care, but first, always inform the meeting organizer and arrange to get an assessment from a healthcare provider. If you have fever, cough or respiratory symptoms AND you have been to a high-risk location or cared for someone with COVID-19, you may be considered a suspect COVID-19 case. Ensure that you tell the organizers or any responding medical personnel of your travel history.

If you or other participants in the meeting room are unwell: Organizers will coordinate and help you on how to get access to medical care. They will also advise on any necessary cleanup in the meeting room.

For medical emergencies: You should inform the meeting organizer and they will connect you or provide you with the contact number of the local health authority or paramedics.

For all other medical care: If you are in your duty station, contact your duty station clinic for consultation. If you have any other health care needs, from needing replacement medication to being unwell, you should go to a local urgent care clinic, or inform the organizer who may be able to provide you with contacts or the location of a local healthcare provider or pharmacy



SPECIFIC MEASURES BEFORE & DURING THE MEETING

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Review this “Information for Meeting Participants’ package (including the accompanying brochures) and be aware of the signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and how to manage it.
- Ensure that you have your health insurance card or information with you at all times
- It is preferred that you get vaccinated for influenza.
- Bring additional routine medications, spare contact lenses or spectacles, etc.

DURING THE MEETING

- Strictly do not attend the meeting if you are unwell, have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
- Undertake regular preventive measures such as cough etiquette and regular handwashing as described in the brochures provided.
- Contact the meeting organizer and local duty station clinic if you are unwell AND have also been to a location with widespread coronavirus outbreak in the last 14 days.

FAQ’S FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

I have an important role or presentation to make, and I am unwell. What should I do? You should not attend the meeting. Speak with the organizers who should have videoconference arrangements in place so that you can attend or deliver presentations remotely.

Another participant is coughing and unwell. What should I do? The first step is to keep your distance, at least 1 m / 3 feet, from them. If appropriate, encourage the person to avoid others and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

Another participant is coughing and unwell AND I have confirmed information that they have recently been in a country with a widespread COVID-19 outbreak. What should I do? If and only if you believe that there is a risk to other participants, speak with the meeting organizers who have been given advice from the medical service on what to do.

In the event I need to be ‘quarantined’, what does this mean? This may be required if you are unwell, and really means 3 key things in practice. You should:

- Avoid contacts by staying in your accommodation and keeping at least 1 m / 3 feet away from others.
- Minimize the spread of virus particles by covering your cough, cleaning surfaces, and washing or sanitizing your hands regularly.
- Seek care or medical advice by phone first *before* seeing a healthcare provider in person.

Will there be hand sanitizer available? Generally, yes. Organizers should have arranged to have hand sanitizer available, although simple handwashing is equally (if not more) effective.

Should I or other participants who are well wear face masks? No. According to the WHO, there is no benefit for individuals who are well and free from respiratory symptoms to wear face masks. We discourage their use, except if it is a mandatory requirement by the host country authorities. Masks may even increase the spread of the virus because they are touched/adjusted so often.

Is there other information available? Yes. The information provided in this brief is enough to manage most concerns. However, for further information, we advise that you refer only to reputable and up to date sources. We encourage you to review the ‘Travel Advice’ and ‘Protect Yourself’ sections in the World Health Organization website which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent information.

WHO COVID-19 Webpage - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

UN COVID-19 Staff Webpage - <https://hr.un.org/page/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

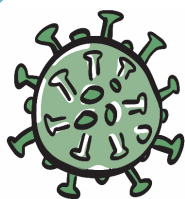


Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.





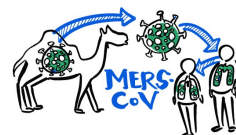
What should I know about coronaviruses?

Where do coronaviruses come from?

- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).
- Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people, and coronaviruses also cause disease in a wide variety of animal species.
- SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans in China in 2002 and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans in Saudi Arabia in 2012.
- Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.
- A spillover event is when a virus that is circulating in an animal species is found to have been transmitted to human (s).
- **Human to human transmission:** Based on current available information, Coronaviruses may be transmitted from person to person either through droplets or contact.

What is COVID-19?

- A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.
- The first cases of COVID-19 were identified in Wuhan, China in 2019.
- **There is no specific treatment for disease caused by a novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and therefore treatment based on the patient's clinical condition. Moreover, supportive care for infected persons can be highly effective.**



What are the symptoms of COVID-19 infection?

- Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Who is at risk for COVID-19 infection?

- With the current information available, it is suggested that the route of human-to-human transmission of COVID-19 is either via respiratory droplets or contact. Any person who is in close contact (within 1 meter) with someone who has respiratory symptoms (e.g., sneezing, coughing, etc.) is at risk of being exposed to potentially infective respiratory droplets.
- The people who are at risk of getting the disease are people who live in or have visited an affected country/area or territory reporting local transmission.
- Additionally, people, including family members or health care workers, who are caring for a person infected with COVID-19
- The source of the outbreak is believed to be from an animal in a live animal market, but this is still under investigation.





How can I prevent from getting infected with COVID-19?



Protect yourself from illness with respiratory pathogens by practicing hand and respiratory hygiene and safe food practices:

- Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub (for 20-30 seconds) when hands are not visibly soiled or soap and water (for 40-60 seconds) when hands are soiled;
- When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately in a closed bin and wash hands;
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;
- Perform hand hygiene after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects or materials.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider;
- When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals;
- The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices.
- See WHO advice on the use of masks here: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>
- **Keep a daily temperature log during duty travel to monitor your health and symptoms during duty travel and for 14 days after returning.**

What do I do if I think I have COVID-19?

- **If you are experiencing fever, cough and difficulty breathing and have recently travelled to or are a resident in an area where COVID-19 is circulating reported, seek medical care immediately.**
- Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. If advised to seek care, wear a medical mask when you go to doctor's office/emergency room.
- Call or email your Medical Services if available.
- Inform your Manager.
- **Do not go to work while sick** and minimize contact with others to prevent the spread of infection.

Precautions in health care settings:

- Health care workers (HCWs) caring for patients should apply standard precautions for all patients. See WHO Standard precautions in health care: <https://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/standardprecautions/en/>
- HCWs caring for suspected or confirmed coronavirus infection, or handling specimens from them, should implement contact and droplet precautions in addition to standard precautions. See WHO guidance: [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected)





How do I stay healthy while travelling?

STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

Avoid travel if you have a fever and cough

If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider

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STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

Avoid close contact with people suffering from a fever and cough

Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth

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STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

Eat only well-cooked food

Avoid spitting in public

Avoid close contact and travel with animals that are sick

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STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands

If you choose to wear a face mask, be sure to cover mouth and nose – avoid touching mask once it's on

Immediately discard single-use mask after each use and wash hands after removing masks

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STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

If you become sick while travelling, inform crew and seek medical care early

If you seek medical attention, share travel history with your health care provider

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What to know after duty travel:

Immediate medical follow up is strongly recommended if you have had symptoms during your mission or 14 days after returning. Alert your medical services (if available) by phone or email, highlighting recent travel to an area with COVID-19, and inform your manager.

For more information:



- **WHO COVID-19:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- **WHO advice for international travel and trade in relation to COVID-19:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice>
- **UN Medical Services Around the Globe:** <https://hr.un.org/page/medical-services-around-globe>
- **For more information, please go to** <https://hr.un.org/page/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- **For any questions email** dos-dhmosh-public-helath@un.org