

COVID-19

Covid-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was first identified in December 2019 in Hubei province, China. It is very different from, and more serious than, the seasonal influenza outbreaks that happen every year for several reasons. This means that people can be spreading the virus for two weeks without knowing.

WHY IS COVID-19 SO DANGEROUS?

It is very different from, and more serious than, the seasonal influenza outbreaks that happen every year for several reasons. Firstly, it can take up to 14 days for people to display symptoms, rather than two days for influenza. This means that people can be spreading the virus for two weeks without knowing.

Furthermore, coronavirus is easily spread when people cough out small droplets, packed with the virus, that other people then take in through their mouth, nose or eyes. Finally, Covid-19 has a death rate of 1-3 percent, much higher than influenza, which gives it the potential to overwhelm healthcare systems.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Coronavirus infects the lungs. The symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a dry cough
- breathing difficulties

Over 80 percent of people infected with Covid-19 will experience mild symptoms, similar to the common cold, and may not be aware that they have the virus: another reason it spreads easily. Around 15 percent will experience more severe symptoms, while about 5 percent will suffer from pneumonia.



The illness is more severe in people over 65 years or people with chronic diseases such as heart and lung conditions. It appears that children get very mild symptoms, but as this is a new virus the health information is continually being updated (see below).

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

There are some basic protective measures to use against the new coronavirus:

- **Wash you 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 one metre 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.
- **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
- **Good respiratory hygiene**
Make sure you, and the people around you, cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a 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 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, call for seek medical attention. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
- **Why?**
National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling 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. If not promptly treated, the infection can become severe and may cause kidney and other organ failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma, and death.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Health information is continually being updated. Good sources of information are:

The World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

International Maritime Health Association

<https://www.imha.net>



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