

# CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

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A COMPILATION OF ESSENTIAL  
INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIRUS.

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## HARD FACTS

There are numerous viruses that can be classified as coronaviruses, many of which are not harmful to human beings. This is why this particular strain of coronavirus is called SARS-CoV-2 and the disease that it causes is named COVID-19, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).



**COVID-19 symptoms simplified:** Cough, fever, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, fatigue – ECDC.

- **COVID-19 prevention simplified:** Avoid contact with sick people, wash your hands with soap and water, cover coughs and sneezes with your upper arm or a tissue. Never cough in the direction of someone else. Regularly disinfecting commonly-used surfaces with antimicrobial detergents is also recommended.
- The COVID-19 virus is believed to be transmitted via respiratory droplets and mostly via coughing and sneezing, says the ECDC.
- People of Asian descent are not more likely to get COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests we “stop fear by letting people know that being of Asian descent does not increase the chance of getting or spreading COVID-19.”
- It’s not necessary to wear a facemask if you’re healthy unless instructed to do so by a health worker. “The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.” However, using a face mask if you are infected may help prevent spreading the virus to others.
- There is currently no evidence to suggest that products shipped from affected areas in China could transmit the virus, says the CDC.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) says that washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitiser is still one of the best lines of defence but that hand dryers are not effective in killing this virus or other flu viruses. Paper towels are preferable.

- There is currently no vaccine for the COVID-19 coronavirus available. However, vaccination for seasonal flu is recommended.
- Rinsing your nose with saline or medicated spray does not help to prevent transmission of COVID-19 – WHO
- People of all ages can be affected by the virus but the elderly and people with chronic conditions may become more severely ill – WHO
- Taking antibiotics will not help to prevent you being infected with COVID-19 or any other virus – WHO



## SYMPTOMS

Not all viruses are created equal – as is the case with coronaviruses (which have many different types that fall under the same family name).

For the most part members of this family of viruses are fairly mild in nature, causing symptoms like the common cold, whereas other types lead to more severe symptoms.



Examples of dangerous coronavirus strains over recent times include SARS-CoV (China 2003), MERS-CoV (Saudi Arabia 2012) and most recently, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 (China 2019).

Here is what is known so far in terms of symptoms associated with COVID-19, according to the World Health Organization.

It's important to note that these symptoms range from mild to severe, and usually appear within the first two weeks after contracting the virus:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- A small percentage of people (less than 5 per cent) can present with a runny nose and other flu-like symptoms

Some people infected with COVID-19 may be asymptomatic, meaning that they do not show any symptoms at all.



## PREVENTION

The strain of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 and the disease that it causes, COVID-19, has gradually spread around the world and therefore, preventative measures are critical, especially for those who are more vulnerable to coming into contact with the virus.



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), groups most at risk of serious illness are the elderly and people with chronic medical conditions like diabetes, heart disease and lung disease.

According to the WHO, you can take preventative measures against contracting the virus by:

- Avoiding close contact with those who are sick, when possible. (1 metre is sufficient).
- Wearing masks, gloves and protective clothing in a healthcare setting. (When wearing a mask, try not to touch it other than to remove it or position it correctly).
- Handwashing, with soap and water or using an alcohol-based rub if your hands are not visibly dirty.

Further to this, the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) also suggest:

- Staying home when you feel ill.
- To try not to touch your nose, eyes and mouth. If unavoidable, rather use the back of your hand but ideally, wash your hands before and after touching your face.
- Wipe and “disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.”

The elderly and people with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, obesity and heart disease may be particularly at risk of severe symptoms from this virus and should exercise caution especially in circumstances that pose risk warns, the CDC.



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT

The World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 a pandemic, as it has spread to most countries around the world. At this time it may be difficult to determine the likelihood of transmission due to the rapidly changing nature of the outbreak.

There are also many other causative agents and common bugs that may bring about respiratory infections.



However, if you have symptoms, including fever, persistent coughing and difficulty breathing, it is important to seek medical care early. The Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that you should not go out if you're feeling unwell.

"Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms."

They will then best advise you regarding going for diagnostic testing to confirm or refute your suspicion. In the meantime:

- Separate yourself from other people in your home and do not go out, except to get medical care.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands with soap and water, often.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Continue to monitor your symptoms, follow doctor's orders and remain calm and rest.
- If you suspect that you have COVID-19, wear a mask when interacting with your family and limit visitors. Take note of who you may come into contact with.
- "Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure" - The CDC.



## THE DANGERS OF MISINFORMATION

During high profile global events like the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, it is unfortunate that some people may create and disseminate content that contains false or exaggerated information.

This “fake” information can often be very convincing and appear true, which can make this type of misinformation potentially harmful and provocative.



Misinformation about the COVID-19 coronavirus has resulted in certain groups of people facing unnecessary stigma and discrimination and is even believed to be the cause of a violent riot that broke out in the Ukraine mid-February, after a false email about the virus was widely circulated.

During a recent speech in Munich, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, had the following to say on the dangers of spreading and consuming misinformation:

“Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous.

That’s why we’re also working with search and media companies like Facebook, Google, Pinterest, Tencent, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube and others to counter the spread of rumours and misinformation.

We call on all governments, companies and news organisations to work with us to sound the appropriate level of alarm, without fanning the flames of hysteria.”

The Director-General expressed his belief that it is not the disease itself that we should be concerned about so much as the stigmatisation and discrimination being caused around it that would set us one against the other. “All countries can still change the course of this pandemic”, he stressed. And that at this time, words like “prevention, preparedness, public health, political leadership and most of all, people”, should also come into focus.

Reliable sources for information about the COVID-19 virus include the following websites:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>



# STIGMATISATION

## **What is stigma?**

Stigma and discrimination can occur when people become worried about a disease and are not sufficiently educated about the facts around the disease and how it is spread.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this stigma and discrimination can occur when uninformed people associate infectious diseases, like COVID-19 coronavirus with a specific population and nationality.

“Viruses cannot target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds.”

Associating the virus with people of Asian descent is a form of stigma, which hurts everyone because it creates fear and anger towards a group of people instead of “the disease that is causing the problem”.

### **What can be done to combat this harmful stigma?**

The CDC suggests the following actions to prevent the unnecessary spread of COVID-19 stigmatisation:

- Be cautious of what images and information you share on social media. Make sure they don't reinforce harmful stereotypes.
- Raise awareness of the virus and how to prevent it without causing fear and alarm.
- Make sure that the information you share and talk about is factual and up to date.
- Speak out against discriminatory behaviour such as posts on social media and any form of prejudiced or uninformed discussion on the topic based on speculation.



## WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO?

### **A Corporate Guideline with targeted information for employees, managers and corporate custodians**

In January 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the new coronavirus in Hubei Province, China, to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On the 11th of March 2020, the WHO reclassified the outbreak as a pandemic - an epidemic that has reached global proportions.



While COVID-19 continues to spread across the world, there is still much to be learned about its transmission, severity and other features.

Businesses should be aware of the known facts of the virus and how it could impact them, considering plans to manage exposure should the need arise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers, which could be useful in forming a corporate plan of action, in the instance of a COVID-19 outbreak. It includes the following points:

**1. Encourage employees with flu symptoms to stay at home.**

COVID-19 infection is likely if someone has been in an area with possible exposure to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 and display symptoms that include fever and trouble breathing.

Employees who have other respiratory illnesses should probably also stay at home and not return to work until their fever has subsided for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicines). They should advise their supervisor if they are sick and keep them updated.

Influenza and COVID-19 coronavirus are not the same but they are transmitted in similar ways and the impact of influenza should also be taken into consideration.

According to research published in the Journal of Global Health, between 99,000 and 200,000 people died in 2019 due to influenza. As a result, global health authorities like the WHO and CDC are united in efforts to encourage seasonal flu vaccination around the world.

At this time, it is important that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of this. Sick employees who are infectious may try to continue to work, if they fear their

health benefits may fall away.

Advise agencies or companies that provide temporary or contract workers to follow the same protocol with regards to sick workers and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.

Relax the rules about having a medical certificate from a health provider to validate time off work, as medical facilities or healthcare providers could be under strain and unable to provide certificates timeously.

Employees with sick family members should be permitted to stay home and care for them. Employers should be aware and prepared that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick family members than usual.

## **2. Separate sick employees.**

Any employees arriving at their place of work with symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath), or those developing symptoms during the work day, should be separated from other employees immediately, and sent home.

## **3. Emphasise the importance of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for all employees.**

Place posters that encourage staying at home when sick, coughing and sneezing etiquette and hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in communal areas where they are likely to be seen. Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for employee use, as well as alcohol-based hand sanitiser, soap and water, in good supply.

## **4. Perform routine environmental cleaning.**

All touched surfaces, such as work stations, door knobs and countertops should be routinely cleaned, with the usual cleaning agents. Provide disposable wipes for employees to wipe down surfaces regularly, including telephones, remote controls and keyboards.

## **5. Review the need for travel and if necessary, advise and prepare employees accordingly.**

Check the CDC's Traveller Health Notices, for specific information and recommendations on travel and COVID-19. Advise employees on the risks, the symptoms and what to do if they feel sick while travelling. Emphasise how important it is for employees who feel they might be sick, to inform their supervisor, as well as the appropriate healthcare provider.

Since the incubation period of COVID-19 is known to be 14 days, it is important that any employees who have travelled, monitor themselves carefully for symptoms after they have returned.

Any employees who fall into the high-risk category of contracting COVID-19 – older employees or those with existing medical conditions like diabetes, heart or lung disease – should not travel for business.

## **6. Encourage seasonal flu vaccination.**

Although there is currently no vaccine for COVID-19, various experts have suggested that vaccinating against other types of influenza may have its benefits. Among those advocating the “flu shot”, Dr. Albert Ko, a professor and department chair at the Yale School of Public Health told LiveScience that it would help us better determine who does have COVID-19 and also decrease the significant burden on hospitals and health practitioners found during the flu season.

The CDC also promotes flu vaccination, stating that it reduces the risk of illness, hospitalisation and flu-related deaths in people with chronic conditions, children and the elderly.

***It is very important during this time not to make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin.***

The plan should address how to keep the business running, even if employees, contractors and suppliers are unable to come to their place of work, due to travel restrictions or if they are ill or having to care for the sick. Quite importantly, the plan should also address the mental health and social consequences of an outbreak in the workplace or community and offer support and information. Once a plan has been developed, it is advisable to share it with other businesses in the community.

One of the best actions you can take as an employer or corporate custodian is to stay informed, both of new developments or discoveries about the coronavirus, and the situation reports as to its spread. WHO head, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said in a recent news conference,

**“This is a time for facts, not fear. This is a time for rationality, not rumours. This is a time for solidarity, not stigma.”**



## TRAVEL Q & A

Please note that due to the developing nature of the COVID-19 coronavirus, some of the advice contained within this document may become irrelevant from moment to moment.



### **Question 1: How does the COVID-19 coronavirus spread?**

According to the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus was originally transmitted from an animal to a person in a market in Wuhan City, but the virus is mostly being spread from person-to-person.

The virus is usually spread via respiratory droplets that are breathed in or enter the body through the nose, eyes or mouth when someone has touched an object containing respiratory droplets.

### **Question 2: How do I know if someone has COVID-19?**

You can't be sure who has been infected with COVID-19 unless a specific test has been conducted, but anyone displaying flu symptoms of fever, cough, difficulty breathing and other flu symptoms should ideally maintain a distance of roughly a metre or more to prevent infection of flu.

### **Question 3: Should I cancel my travel plans?**

The Centers for Disease Control currently list their travel advice as Warning Level 3 – Avoid Nonessential Travel. This warning level advises people to avoid travel to China, South Korea, Iran and Italy. For China, this does not include Hong Kong, Macau or the island of Taiwan.

The recommended travel restriction includes layovers in the abovementioned countries. If layovers are unavoidable, the CDC recommends that travellers not leave the airport.

They also recommend that travellers, particularly those with underlying health issues, defer all cruise ship travel at this time, due to the close contact of a large number of people, often from all over the world.

Travel warnings may rapidly escalate or become obsolete as the pandemic develops. It is essential to keep abreast of developments to gauge the risks involved.

#### **Question 4: Does being onboard a plane pose a threat?**

Dr Dolea of the World Health Organization (WHO) does not believe it necessarily is a threat. Because the virus is transmitted via droplets, risk of infection in a cabin environment is minimised, particularly if you practise hand hygiene. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitiser. She also suggests practising the usual preventative measures for respiratory infections and using coughing etiquette, which means covering your nose and mouth with your elbow when you cough and sneeze. "Research has shown that there is very little risk of any communicable disease being transmitted on board an aircraft." - The WHO

#### **Question 5: Should I use a facemask?**

If you are healthy, there is no need to use a facemask, according to Dr Doleo. The mask is only effective if someone who is already sick uses it to prevent transmitting infections further. If you do use a mask, try not to touch it in the same way you would avoid touching your nose and mouth.

#### **Question 6: Where can I learn more about countries that have issued travel warnings?**

The CDC has a travel information page that is regularly updated. You can visit the site to discover the very latest travel information and health advice regarding COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>

#### **Question 7: I've just been to China, Italy, South Korea, Iran or somewhere that COVID-19 is prevalent. What now?**

According to the CDC, if you have recently been in a place that may have exposed you to the COVID-19 coronavirus, you should stay at home and monitor your health for a 14-day period.

During this time, you should monitor your temperature, checking it at least twice per day.

In the event that you develop a high fever, cough or experience difficulty breathing you should contact a healthcare provider and stipulate that you have recently returned from a place that may have exposed you to the virus.



## HOME QUARANTINE GUIDE

During the COVID-19 outbreak, individuals who might have been at risk of exposure to the virus but are not displaying any symptoms (or may have tested positive but are also not displaying symptoms) could be required to remain at home and self-isolate or self-quarantine for 14 days or more.



It is not recommended that individuals decide to self-isolate without first consulting with the relevant health care professionals or authorities. Also, employers should be made aware of any decisions you wish to make on this matter as companies have varying policies regarding absenteeism. If you are sick you should not isolate yourself either and should inform your local health professional via telephone for advice.

During your quarantine period, if you do begin to feel unwell and develop a fever, shortness of breath, cough or other respiratory symptoms you should immediately isolate yourself from others (if you haven't already), follow infection control guidelines and contact your nearest medical facility to arrange a visit when you will pose the least risk of possibly infecting others.

## **Put a plan in place**

The Better Health Channel, an initiative by the Australian Government, makes the following recommendations on how to put a self-quarantine plan in place:

- “Try to have a two-week supply of non-perishable food items in the pantry. Stock long-life alternatives to perishable food items, such as powdered and UHT milk, tinned fruit and frozen vegetables.
- Have a supply of disposable tissues, antibacterial wipes and latex gloves.
- Check that your first aid kit includes a thermometer and paracetamol (to reduce fever).
- Make sure you have enough of any prescription and non-prescription medication you need to last a couple of weeks.
- Talk with friends and relatives who don't live with you about supporting each other if one household has to be quarantined. For example, agree to drop groceries or other supplies at the front door.”

Isolation and quarantine are not the same things. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick”, whereas “quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.”

According to Queensland Health, to self-quarantine is to stay at home, a hotel or other provided accommodation and not leave this place for the period of time you have been instructed. “Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not allow visitors into the home.”

MIT Medical suggests that if you are required to self-quarantine you should do the following:

- Report any symptoms of COVID-19 immediately to a health professional.
- “Stay in your room, apartment or house. Do not go to work, classes, athletic events, or other social or religious gatherings until 14 days.”
- Limit contact with other people. This includes isolating yourself as much as possible from anyone living in your residence.”
- “Cover coughs and sneezes with your upper arm or a tissue. Never cough in the direction of someone else.”
- “Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage.”
- “Avoid sharing household items. Do not share drinking glasses, towels, eating utensils, bedding, or any other items until you are no longer asked to self-quarantine.”
- Keep surroundings clean. “While the virus is not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, try to clean surfaces that you share with others, such as door knobs, telephones, and bathroom surfaces (or any other object that you sneeze or cough on), with a standard household disinfectant. Wash your hands after cleaning the area.”

## **Home quarantine the healthy way**

If you are required to home quarantine for 14 days or more, it may be tempting to spend that time sitting all day watching series or catching up on work but there is no reason to adopt sedentary behaviour just because you’re at home.

According to Medical News Today, sedentary behaviour can contribute to obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some types of cancer. You can reduce sedentary behaviour in the following ways, according to the medical news resource:

- Take regular walks if it is safe to do so (even just around the house)
- Don't sit for longer than 30 minutes at a stretch
- Do chores around the house like DIY and gardening
- Minimise time watching television and playing video games
- Get up and walk around during television commercials
- Stand as you work or watch television

Stay active and hold yourself accountable for the foods you eat during this time too. Having access to your kitchen all day shouldn't be an excuse to eat all the wrong things.

## **Mental wellbeing during quarantine**

You can use this time in quarantine to also focus on your physical and mental health. Queensland Health suggests keeping your spirits up during this time in the following ways:

- "Talk to the other members of the family about the infection. Understanding novel coronavirus will reduce anxiety.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Think about how you have coped with difficult situations in the past and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation too. Remember that quarantine won't last for long.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly. Options could include exercise DVDs, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle, if you have one. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression."