

STATEMENT

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

What is it

COVID-19 is a new disease, this means that at this point much of what is known about it (how it spreads, how to prevent it, etc) is derived from past experience with related Coronavirus infections (such as SARS-CoV in 2003, and MERS-CoV in 2012). This virus, however, seems to spread more easily and sustainably in the community than its predecessors.

How does it spread

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person close contact through respiratory micro-droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. To a lesser degree, it may also spread through infected objects or surfaces (at this point it looks like the virus may remain viable for 2 to 3 days on the surface of an object).

What can I do about it

There is currently no vaccine against the disease, nor is there any specific anti-viral medication to treat it, therefore the best way to prevent getting sick from this virus is to avoid being exposed to it. Following are some common sense and very effective ways in which you may prevent the spread of this respiratory virus:

- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with people who are sick.
- Avoid physical contact (hand-shaking, etc) with those with symptoms (see below).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth (this reduces the risk of transporting the virus from a contaminated surface into your body).
- If you feel sick (see symptoms), stay home.

- Cover your mouth/nose when coughing or sneezing. Use a tissue and dispose of it in the trash (avoid coughing/sneezing into your hand).
- Wash your hands frequently with soap (for at least 20 sec) and water, especially after coughing, sneezing, before eating or after using the bathroom. If soap and water are not immediately available, you may use a hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol).
- If you are ill, use a face mask to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. There is no evidence of a protecting effect from wearing a face mask by those who are well.
- Clean “high touch” surfaces frequently with a regular disinfectant.

What to do if I become sick

The most common symptoms of the disease are: fever, cough and shortness of breath. These symptoms seem to vary in intensity, from very mild to sometimes severe. If you think that you may be ill:

- Call your doctor and let him/her know in advance that you have a respiratory ailment (Your doctor should be able to coordinate testing for COVID-19).
- Separate yourself from other people (until diagnosis is ruled-out), and follow all of the prevention interventions outlined above).

Additional information

A few sources of additional information are the COVID-19 web pages at the US National Institutes of Health nih.gov and at The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cdc.gov. You may also consider the World Health Organization Coronavirus page at www.who.int

HEALTH MINISTRIES

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