

COVID-2019

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In December 2019, a new and aggressive form of respiratory infection was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and recently been named COVID – 19. The virus is a corona virus and of the same family as the virus that caused the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic in 2002-3.

Transmission occurs through droplet spread when infected people cough or sneeze and gains access to the body through the respiratory tract (lungs). The symptoms include fever, cough, muscle pain, shortness of breath and fatigue; some patients may have diarrhea, and others very mild to no symptoms at all. Progression of the disease may lead to a severe pneumonia with lung tissue destruction and death. There has been spread outside of China, and there is no way of predicting how widespread and severe this outbreak may yet become. Many countries have placed measures in place to contain the spread including making this a quarantinable disease. The period when an individual may be infectious is between 2 and 14 days. The time period for quarantine (isolation from others) is 2 weeks.

There is no vaccine as yet, and the treatment is symptomatic. There are presently no known COVID-19 antiviral medications. The production of a vaccine although priority, may take up to a year to prove efficacy and safety. Reliable monitoring sources have observed that those who have not had immunization against influenza seem to have more severe symptoms and worse outcomes. It is difficult to accurately assess the death rate from COVID-19 as not every case has been reported, but is presently estimated at 2%.

Please practice the standard universal precautions as we always should:

- Frequently clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Coughing and sneezing etiquette: Sneeze into the folded arm; cover your cough. Take masks with you when traveling. Should you encounter situations where people cough and sneeze and are in close proximity, have no hesitation to use your mask (airports, airplane cabin, lobbies, malls, student classes and other gatherings, etc.)
- Maintain social distancing – at least 3 feet or 1 meter between yourself and other people. Avoid close contact with those who cough or are sniveling ...
- Avoid touching/rubbing your eyes, nose and mouth
- If you develop a cough and experience changes in your breathing, seek medical help early and share your travel history with the health care provider
- Avoid open markets and direct contact with animals/animal products
- Careful food safety practices (well-cooked food, clean produce, pasteurized milk)
- Do not avoid the flu vaccine
- Avoid travel to endemic areas; there is a WHO travel advisory against travel to China.

If you think you have been exposed by travel or contact with an affected individual, SEEK ADVICE from your primary care physician! Be sure to disclose your travel history. There is global awareness, and this is not the time to panic – rather to quietly trust in God.

For more information:

- Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) – <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Advice for the public – <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- Travel advice – <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice>
- Risk communication and community engagement – [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/risk-communication-and-community-engagement-readiness-and-initial-response-for-novel-coronaviruses-\(ncov\)](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/risk-communication-and-community-engagement-readiness-and-initial-response-for-novel-coronaviruses-(ncov))
- Proper handwashing technique - https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/
- Science behind handwashing techniques – <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html>
- <https://www.who.int/ith/2020-24-01-outbreak-of-Pneumonia-caused-by-new-coronavirus/en/>