



From the IIMHL and IIDL Update List

Update on Coronavirus/Covid-19

Issue 2 - 13th March 2020

*“Let hope be the antidote to fear.
Let solidarity be the antidote to blame.
Let our shared humanity be the antidote to our shared threat”*

Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organisation

This bulletin covers general information for people; and, it outlines mental health issues, basic hygiene, facts, information for schools and services in general.

A “pandemic” is in place

The World Health Organization on Wednesday declared the rapidly spreading [coronavirus outbreak](#) a pandemic, acknowledging what has seemed clear for some time — the virus will likely spread to all countries on the globe.

Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the situation will worsen. “We expect to see the number of cases, the number of deaths, and the number of affected countries climb even higher,” said Tedros, as the director general is known.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>

FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV.’ The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it.

Who is most at risk?

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. This is a new virus and we need to learn more about how it affects children. The virus can be fatal in rare cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4

Video on how to protect yourself

There are several measures you can adopt to protect yourself against the new coronavirus. Watch this short video and find out what the recommendations from WHO experts are.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPITHEiFWLc#action=share>

Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak

WHO and public health authorities around the world are taking action to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. However, this time of crisis is generating stress in the population. These mental health considerations were developed by the Mental Health Department as support for mental and psychological well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency on a person can depend on the person's characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the person and their community, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media. For more click link below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>

WHO briefing on COVID-19 9th March 2020

For all countries, the aim is the same: stop transmission and prevent the spread of the virus.

In areas with community spread, testing every suspected case and tracing their contacts becomes more challenging. Action must be taken to prevent transmission at the community level to reduce the epidemic to manageable clusters.

Depending on their context, countries with community transmission could consider closing schools, cancelling mass gatherings and other measures to reduce exposure.

The fundamental elements of the response are the same for all countries:

- **Emergency response mechanisms;**
- **Risk communications and public engagement;**
- **Case finding and contact tracing;**
- **Public health measures such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing;**
- **Laboratory testing;**
- **Treating patients and hospital readiness;**
- **Infection prevention and control;**
- **And an all-of-society, all-of-government approach.**

Further details on specific actions countries should take in specific contexts are available on WHO's website.

<https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---9-march-2020>

From New Zealand - What is “contact tracing?”

Health services use contact tracing to find people who may have been exposed to an infectious disease. There are two types of ‘contacts’ – close contacts and casual contacts. Health services give advice to both of these contact types on what they need to do.

https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/infosheet-what_is_contact_tracing-english-9032020_0.pdf

Critical preparedness, readiness and response actions for COVID-19 for countries

All countries should increase their level of preparedness, alert and response to identify, manage and care for new cases of COVID-19. Countries should prepare to respond to different public health scenarios, recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to managing cases and outbreaks of COVID-19. Each country should assess its risk and rapidly implement the necessary measures at the appropriate scale to reduce both COVID-19 transmission and economic, public and social impacts.

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/critical-preparedness-readiness-and-response-actions-for-covid-19>

Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools March 2020

A 13 page WHO booklet describes how schools can assist in this work.

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4

Information for health workers

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/who-rights-roles-respon-hw-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=bcabd401_0

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WEBSITE

**Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
Department of Psychiatry
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences**

Infectious disease outbreaks, such as the novel Coronavirus (nCoV) increase fear and uncertainty. Knowing how to care for yourself and your family can reduce distress and allow people to function more effectively.

These educational fact sheets provide information and recommendations for healthcare personnel, families, businesses, and communities on caring for yourself and your family during this emerging infectious disease outbreak.

<https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response>

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