



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-2019)

What is a Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

What is novel coronavirus?

A novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

Can humans get infected from novel coronavirus from animal source?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in animals. Occasionally, people get infected with these viruses which may then spread to other people. For example, SARS-CoV was associated with civet cats and MERS-CoV is transmitted by dromedary camels. Possible animal sources of COVID-19 have not yet been confirmed.

To protect yourself, such as when visiting live animal markets, avoid direct contact with animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Ensure good food safety practices at all times. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid contamination of uncooked foods and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

What are the symptoms of someone infected with a coronavirus?

It depends on the virus, but common signs include **respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath,** and **breathing difficulties**. In more severe cases, infection can cause **pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure** and **even death**.

Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

Can coronaviruses be transmitted from person to person?

Yes, some coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example, in a household workplace, or health care centre.

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air.

Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the feces of someone with the disease?

The risk of catching COVID-19 from the feces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in feces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings. Because this is a risk, however, it is another reason to clean hands regularly, after using the bathroom and before eating.

How long is the incubation period of COVID-19

The “incubation period” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

Is there a vaccine for a novel coronavirus?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation. They are being tested through clinical trials.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue, and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing. (See [Basic protective measures against the new coronavirus](#)).

Is there a treatment for a novel coronavirus?

There is no specific treatment for disease caused by a novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and therefore treatment based on the patient’s clinical condition. Moreover, supportive care for infected persons can be highly effective.

What do you need to do to protect yourself and others from getting the infection?

- Wash hands often,
- Keep away from people who are sick
- Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands immediately.
- Report fever, cough and shortness of breath to the nearest health facility

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. Many countries around the world have seen cases of COVID-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some other countries have succeeded in slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable so check regularly for the latest news.

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) 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. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- 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.

- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or 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 cold, flu and COVID-19.

- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. 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 in advance 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 and other infections.

- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.

Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading

- Follow the guidance outlined above (Protection measures for everyone)
- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.

Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.

- If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers.

Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

- Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face mask can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so use masks wisely.
- People are advised to rationally use medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and mis-use of masks (see Advice on the use of masks).
- The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing. See basic protective measures against the new coronavirus for more information.

How should I use a mask?

1. Remember, a mask should only be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with respiratory symptoms, such as fever and cough.
2. Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
3. Take the mask and inspect it for tears or holes.
4. Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip is).
5. Ensure the proper side of the mask faces outwards (the coloured side).
6. Place the mask to your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
7. Pull down the mask's bottom so it covers your mouth and your chin.
8. After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes, to avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
9. Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
10. Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask – Use alcohol-based hand rub or, if visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

Are health workers at risk from a novel coronavirus?

Yes, they can be, as health care workers come into contact with patients more often than the general public the Ministry of Health recommends that health care workers consistently apply appropriate infection prevention and control measures.

What do I need to know if I plan to travel to China or other countries reporting cases of the new Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

- Use a face mask while visiting a crowded places
- Avoid contact with sick people with flu like illness.
- Avoid direct contact with animals (alive or dead) both domestic or wild
- Avoid eating raw or partially cooked meat
- Always Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Also, you may use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

NB: Should you develop flu like symptoms Consult the nearest hospital/health insurance provider or the Kenyan Embassy.

What do I need to do if I am travelling from China or other countries reporting cases of the new Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and feel sick with fever cough, or difficulty in breathing?

- Seek medical care immediately.
- Use face mask and other materials to prevent spread to family members and other people
- Avoid travel while sick with flu like illnesses
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Report to the **Ministry of Health through the Emergency Toll Free line 0800721316** or this hotlines numbers; **+254729471414/+254732353535.**

How long does the virus survive on the surface?

- It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).
- If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Is there anything I should not do?

The following measures **ARE NOT** effective against COVID-2019 and can be harmful:

- Smoking
- Wearing multiple masks
- Taking antibiotics (See question 10 "*Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?*")

In any case, if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early to reduce the risk of developing a more severe infection and be sure to share your recent travel history with your health care provider.

Misconceptions on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):

Misconception #1: A vaccine to prevent COVID-19 is available.

Fact: There is no vaccine for the new coronavirus right now. Scientists have already begun working on one, but developing a vaccine that is safe and effective in human beings takes time.

Misconception #2: You can protect yourself from COVID-19 by swallowing or gargling bleach, taking acetic acid or steroids, or using essential oils, salt water, ethanol or other substances.

Fact: None of these substances can protect you from getting COVID-19, and some may be harmful to your health.

Misconception #3: The new coronavirus was created as a biological weapon and deliberately released.

Fact: COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus disease that is now being transmitted from human to human.

Misconception #4: Importing products from countries reporting COVID-19 outbreaks will transmit the disease.

Fact: Coronavirus cannot survive outside the human body for more than 24 hours. It is very unlikely that the virus will survive on a surface after being exposed to different conditions and temperatures.

Misconception #5: "You can get Coronavirus from pets"

Fact: According to the WHO, there's no evidence that household pets will pass on coronavirus. However, it is always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with pets. This protects you against various common bacteria.

Misconception #6: Drinking Alcohol Will Protect You from Coronavirus

Fact: Drinking alcohol does not kill viruses that have already entered your body. The most effective way to protect yourself against the new coronavirus is by frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitiser or washing them with soap and running water.

Misconception #7: Coronavirus does not affect black people

Fact: All human beings are at risk of contracting Coronavirus

Misconception #8: Coronavirus only affects older people

Fact: People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus.

1. General Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019

1. Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID19) is a new respiratory illness that can easily be spread from person to person.
2. COVID-19 is spread through contact with droplets produced by a person who is sneezing or coughing or contaminated surfaces or objects.
3. COVID-19 can cause severe symptoms like fever, cough, headache, body aches and difficulty in breathing.
4. COVID-19 is preventable through;
 - Washing your hands with soap and running water or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer,
 - Keeping a social distance of at least 2 metres or 2-3 steps from people with flu-like symptoms.
 - Avoiding shaking hands, hugging or kissing with people with flu-like symptoms.
 - Staying at home and avoiding travel when you have flu-like symptoms.
5. Early detection and treatment can contribute greatly to survival of the patient.
6. COVID 2019 cannot be transmitted through air.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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