

CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION

REFERENCE TEXT

July 9, 2020

This text is available at <https://virallanguages.org/reference-text>

This is a comprehensive text condensing all the WHO health recommendations related to coronavirus into one place. As partners on this project, the [Community of Excellence in Global Health Equity](#) leadership at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, has reviewed, edited, and opined on this text.

This text is not meant to be translated into your language in its entirety. Rather, it is meant to give you a broader understanding of the situation at hand and provide inspiration for creating your own content adapted to your community.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISEASE

- The disease is called “coronavirus disease” or “COVID-19”. It is caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. Since the start of the epidemic more than eleven million people globally have been infected with COVID-19 (updated July 9, 2020) and more than half a million people have died from it. Numbers are decreasing in Europe but are spiking in the US, in South America, Africa, and Asia.
- Many treatments are being tested but as of today there is still no vaccine or cure for the virus. The only way to protect yourself and your loved ones is to avoid getting infected.
- Once in the body, the virus could reach the lungs, where it can cause pneumonia. Pneumonia or other complications associated with pneumonia are the main cause of death among infected people.
- The risk of dying from COVID-19 depends on many factors, including geographic location, age, presence of underlying conditions, and gender. In some places, 1 in 20 people with the infection have died. Males and people older than 60 are more likely to die. People who have a health condition like diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, and cancer are less able to fight this disease and are more likely to die from it. However, it’s not possible to know in advance whether someone will recover after being infected: all over the world there have been cases in which young, previously-healthy people became sick and died from COVID-19.
 - For updated figures on COVID-19 click here:
<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> (for slow connections)
 - <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (for fast connections)

KEY STEPS FOR PREVENTION (THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION)

- If you feel like you have malaria, but also have cough, you may have COVID-19.

- Stay home as much as possible and do not visit other people's homes—even if you do not show symptoms.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently, especially when returning home after going out.
- Don't touch your nose, mouth, or eyes with unwashed hands.
- At home, disinfect surfaces and objects that you or others touch often: plates, utensils, tables, phones, etc....
- If meeting with other people, don't shake hands with them, don't hug them, and remain no less than 2 meters away from them.
- Wear a mask when going out if you have one. Even a homemade one will help. Wash your hands before putting on the mask and after taking it off. Do not touch the mask while outside of the house.

KEY STEPS TO KEEP OTHER PEOPLE SAFE

- Even if you do not have symptoms, you may have caught the virus! So, it is important to stay away from people whenever possible. You could make them sick even if you are not sick.
- If possible, cough or sneeze in a disposable tissue (then throw the tissue out immediately and wash your hands as soon as possible). Or, cough into your elbow or in your upper sleeve. Never cough or sneeze in the air, or toward another person. Never cough or sneeze in your hands, because you can pass the virus to others through touching people or shared objects.
- If you think you are sick, stay home and stay as far away from family members as possible.
- If you have been in close contact with someone who becomes sick, stay home to avoid transmitting the disease. It can be dormant in your body for as long as 14 days.

HOW DOES THE CORONAVIRUS SPREAD?

- The virus is an extremely small, invisible particle that can enter your body through your mouth, your nose, and your eyes. It spreads mostly through respiratory droplets, which are invisible drops of saliva that can be released in the air through breathing, coughing, or sneezing. Respiratory droplets can be found on people's hands, clothes, and bodies and on objects like pillow cases, bed sheets, telephones, and towels. The virus has also been found in the feces (poop) of some infected people.
- The virus can remain in the air for up to 3 hours in the form of minuscule droplets called "aerosol". This is especially the case in closed environments like buses, offices, supermarkets, and hospitals. Air conditioning may make things worse as it can circulate aerosol through a building.

- The virus can survive for some time on surfaces made of plastic and metal or other materials, such as cardboard.
- The virus does not penetrate healthy skin.

MORE ON SYMPTOMS

- The most common symptoms are fever, dry cough, fatigue and, for more severe cases, difficulty breathing.
- Less common but still documented symptoms are diarrhea, bone or joint pain, headache, and runny nose. Loss of smell and taste have also been reported by people with the disease.
- In most cases, the first symptom is fever, followed by dry cough. Everyone who has a body temperature above 37.5°C or a dry cough or both should remain at home and also minimize contacts with people living in the same house.
- Many of the symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to malaria: fever, headache, aches and pains, and fatigue. An important difference is that people with COVID-19 frequently develop a dry cough or difficulty breathing.
- Symptoms can appear between 2 and 14 days after being exposed to someone who is infected.
- People differ in how severe their symptoms will be. In severe cases, people become sick very rapidly: most deaths occurred between 8 and 14 days of infection after the first symptoms appeared.
- There are many cases of people who have the virus but do not show any symptoms. They could infect others.

MORE DETAILS ON HANDWASHING

- Wash your hands using soap, if available, for at least 20 seconds (or, for Christians, the duration of 2 Lord's Prayers pronounced at normal speed: adapt in a culturally-appropriate way). Rub your hands together with the soap until enough foam is obtained. Remember to wash the backs of your hands, your wrists, between the fingers, and under the fingernails to get your hands thoroughly clean. Then rinse with clean water.
- If you don't have water or soap available, another way to clean your hands and get rid of virus particles is to use alcohol. The most effective concentration of alcohol is 75%. Liquors and other alcoholic drinks will not work as their concentration of alcohol is most often less than 50%. IMPORTANT: Don't use bleach or concentrations of alcohol higher than 80% as this will result in drying up your skin, therefore creating more small cracks in which the virus can hide.
- Another possibility is to use wood **ash** instead of soap. Pour a little water on your hands, rub them with abundant ashes, and then rinse under clean flowing

water(for example, from a bottle or can) for at least 20 seconds, even if very slowly.

- Keep your hand fingernails short and clean as the virus can hide in the space between the skin and the nail.

MORE DETAILS ON DISINFECTING SURFACES AND OBJECTS

- Respiratory droplets eventually settle on surfaces and could persist there for hours or days.
- A hand that carries virus particles could also transmit these particles onto objects or surfaces.
- The virus can survive for about one day on cardboard and up to 3 days on plastic and metal surfaces.
- For these reasons, at home it is important that hard surfaces (like tables, sinks, bathtubs...) and objects (like doorknobs, light switches, chairs, handles, keys, telephones...) are kept clean and disinfected.
- The most effective way to disinfect surfaces and objects is to use bleach diluted with water and let it stay on the surface for at least 10 minutes.
- The recommended dilution of bleach into water depends on how concentrated the bleach is. Most commonly, a dilution of 1 part of bleach per 50 parts of water is sufficient to obtain an effective disinfectant. For example, you can put two teaspoons of bleach in 1 liter of water. **Remember to label the bottle containing this solution so that it is not drunk accidentally by children or other people.**
- **IMPORTANT:** bleach can be poisonous! Do not clean with bleach that comes directly from the container. If you use it on surfaces or objects that may come in contact with food or with children, make sure to wipe the disinfected surface or object with a clean towel.
- **IMPORTANT:** dirt will decrease the disinfecting power of bleach. If the surface or object is dirty (oil, grease, dust, etc), make sure to first clean it well, and then apply the bleach solution to disinfect it.
- **IMPORTANT:** Only alcohol should be used to clean and disinfect telephones.

ADJUSTING YOUR SOCIAL LIFE AND CARING FOR THE SICK

- There are places that may put you at higher risk of being infected. These are:
 - Public places where many people gather, such as markets, business offices, and religious gatherings.
 - Hospitals.
 - Public transportation, including shared taxis and motorcycles.

- Banknotes and coins could transmit the virus. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching banknotes and coins. Wash or sanitize your hands after touching banknotes and coins.
- Pillow cases, bed sheets, and clothing worn outside of your home should be washed frequently. If available, first spray some alcohol on the whole surface and let it dry. Then do the washing. Do not shake dirty fabrics since this can spread the virus.
- If someone living in your house has some of the symptoms (see above), the other people living in the house should not have direct contact with him/her nor with objects he/she touches like bed sheets, clothes, glasses, dishes, telephones, and computers, unless these are properly disinfected.
- Children are less likely to die than adults but they can transmit the virus just like anyone else. Teach children how to cough or sneeze in their elbows and how to properly wash their hands. Explain to children that, for some time, it is best if they don't hug or get close to elderly people or people with health issues.
- If a meeting cannot be canceled (e.g. savings groups), limit the number of people gathering at one time. People should stand or sit 2 meters from each other during the entire meeting. People should not eat or drink during the meeting. People with fever or other COVID-19 symptoms should remain home.

USING FACE MASKS

- Face masks can help people who are sick protect others from becoming infected.
- Face masks can help caregivers when interacting with sick people, but they do not provide 100% protection.
- In many countries there is a shortage of face masks, which are vital for medical personnel: if medical personnel get sick, who will be there to assist other sick people? We must protect our nurses and medical doctors.
- Homemade masks made with tea cloth (relatively strong cotton cloth) provide some degree of protection.
- Even when wearing face masks, keep a distance from the person you are assisting.
- There are some special precautions for the use of face masks when you are sick or need to care for sick people
 - If you have heart problems you should not wear a mask (insufficient breathing)
 - Make sure you don't touch the mask while you are wearing it. Touch it only to take it off and throw it away (or wash it if it's washable).
 - Make sure it perfectly adheres to your skin. Wear glasses to also protect your eyes and to close the gaps that naturally form between the mask and your skin around your nose.

- Masks are most effective (within their limits) during the first hours of use. The longer you wear a mask, the less it is effective in protecting you.

The best practices listed in this document are effective only if all the members of the community follow them. Whole communities, not single individuals, can successfully fight the coronavirus pandemic.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about what COVID-19 does to lungs click here:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/07/what-happens-to-lungs-coronavirus-covid-19>

Good links for more information about COVID-19 prevention:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPITHEiFWLc>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Here are two images you could share via social media:

- [Protect others from getting sick 1](#)
- [Protect others from getting sick 2](#)

A recent scientific article about the spread of coronavirus as aerosol and on surfaces:

- https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973?query=featured_home

For more information about COVID-19 symptoms:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

For more information about handwashing:

- a [VIDEO](#) from BBC and
- an article on the science of handwashing:
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/why-handwashing.html>

For more info on the use of soap vs bleach:

- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/03/why-soap-preferable-bleach-fight-against-coronavirus/>

For more information on using wood ash to clean hands:

- <https://unicefethiopia.org/2014/03/05/undsg-jan-eliasson-washes-hands-with-ashes-in-ethiopia/>

For more info on how to care for suspected sick people at home click here:

- [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)

If you want to read a scientific article on the effects of COVID-19 on a number of children in China click here:

- <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2020/03/16/peds.2020-0702.full.pdf>

For more information about homemade face masks click here:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>