



COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

A novel (new) coronavirus has caused an outbreak of respiratory illness and pneumonia in China. The outbreak originated among stall holders and people who visited the Huanan / South China Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan. There is evidence of human-to-human transmission, including among healthcare workers. Cases have been confirmed in people who travelled from Wuhan to Beijing and Shenzhen, as well as to many countries in the world.

Transmission

The source of the infection and how this corona-virus spread is still under investigation. After getting infected it takes around **2-14 days before presenting any symptoms**. This is the so-called **incubation time**.

Symptoms

The main symptoms are **flu like symptoms** which include **fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulty**. Some also experience **diarrhoea** and **confusion**. Around 25% of cases in China have been severe and fatalities have been recorded. People with underlying health conditions appear to be at higher risk for severe disease.

Diagnosis

Specific tests have been developed to diagnose COVID-19. Testing is available in some designated laboratories, however it is becoming more widely available.

Treatment

Treatment of the new coronavirus is **supportive with medication to reduce symptoms** like fever and to support and improve respiratory function. **There is no specific antiviral therapy against this disease**.

Vaccinations

There is no available vaccine COVID-19. In general, IFRC is following the WHO recommendations related to any vaccinations. IFRC vaccination policy is, that no vaccinations are made mandatory for staff.

WHO recommends that all adults should have a Seasonal Influenza vaccination. In this situation the Seasonal Influenza vaccination is strongly recommended as it prevents from falling sick with seasonal influenza in case one catches the COVID-19 virus, which could make the combination lethal. In some countries the **vaccination against pneumonia is also recommended**.

Prevention

The key to stay healthy is to practise general good hygiene. Preventive measures are to **avoid potential exposure**, employ **general hygiene measures** and **safe food practices**.

- 1/ **Keep some distance** from people who are obviously sick and avoid direct contact with them.
- 2/ **Avoid close contact** with potentially infected people. Avoid sharing food, drinks and personal items.
- 3/ To prevent any respiratory illness, **pay attention to hygiene**. Wash your hands frequently. Carry hand sanitizer for use when soap and water are not readily available.
- 4/ Maintain good personal hygiene and practise basic respiratory etiquette. Avoid touching your face. **Cover coughs and sneezes**.
- 5/ **Do not visit wet markets or farms**.
- 6/ **Avoid direct contact with animals** (live or dead) and their environment.
- 7/ Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with droppings.
- 8/ Ensure food, including eggs, is **thoroughly cooked**.
- 9/ **Seek medical attention** if you develop symptoms, especially fever or shortness of breath. Ensure you provide your travel history.
- 10/ To prevent infection from any respiratory illness, pay attention to hygiene, and **avoid contact with sick people**.

Office

Practise good hygiene, wash your hands regularly and use hand sanitizers if no water and soap is available. Staff are expected, as always, stay at home if sick. This is to respect each other's health and wellbeing. In general, if the sickness has continued for more than three days, one must provide a sick leave certificate issued by a medical doctor.

Travel

At the moment WHO does not recommend any travel restrictions. It is advisable to avoid any unnecessary travel to severely affected countries. Do not travel if you are sick - note that some locations have implemented screening measures, and travellers may face quarantine and testing. All travellers must have a proper insurance coverage including medical evacuation.

There is an increasing number of countries barring travellers arriving directly from China or having been in China in the previous 14 days. The cessation of many flights to/from mainland China by some international carriers could significantly impact seat availability for travel out of China.

You can find more information on the various travel restrictions here: <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/travel-restrictions-china-due-covid-19>

After travel

- **Follow the post-travel procedures** required by your local authorities.
- Monitor your health and **measure your temperature for 14 days**.
- **If you develop symptoms, seek medical attention**. Follow the procedures of your local health authorities including wearing a mask if advised. Limit your contact with other people as much as possible, let the medical facility know about your travel history and any potential exposures.
- Those returning from a severely affected area like China (and possible other countries with a lot of cases) should **monitor their health carefully** and **fill the form created for measuring the temperature**.
- **Do not return to work** if any symptoms.

Protective equipment

As the source and way of getting sick are still not confirmed, it is difficult to give exact advice on protective equipment. Here you have some guidance:

- All bathrooms must be provided with **soap**.
- **Hand sanitizers are recommended** when there is no possibility to wash hands. It is recommended that staff always carries a small bottle with them.
- **Face masks are only recommended for those who are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.**

If you get sick

Inform you line manager and your designated contact person. Do not come to work but contact the local health care provider. Follow the guidance provided.

Medical evacuation plan

All delegations should check that their medevac plan is up to date. The recommended hospitals and contact details should be checked. Should there be a situation that the delegate falls sick and needs a medevac, it will be done according the insurance policy and the procedures of the emergency assistance company. It must be noted that some seconded delegates have a different emergency assistance provider than IFRC, which is International SOS. The situations might change rapidly.

Insurance

All staff must have an insurance that covers falling sick with COVID-19. Volunteers must have the volunteer insurance in all programs and operations as always. There is a separate document produced related to insurance coverage in this outbreak.

Quarantine

Some countries have issued quarantine measures. Please check what the guidance is from the Ministry of Health (or other authorities) in your country and the country you are travelling to. Please note that these restrictions and guidance may change rapidly.

In cases where staff after the (surge) mission is not allowed or able to return to their regular work immediately, there might be a reason to extend the contract accordingly.

Deployment

Delegates, surge, consultants and others deploying to support the COVID-19 operation in China and other affected countries, **should be briefed on the current, known risks before travel** either face-to-face or over skype or other means. This is to ensure adequate understanding of the risks.

More information


<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>




www.internationalsos.com and typing the Federation code **22AMMS000091**

For further advice you can contact Staff Health Officer Hannele Haggman: +41 22 730 4417 or staff.health@ifrc.org



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM GETTING SICK:

Reduce risk of coronavirus infection 

-  Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
-  When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue - throw tissue away immediately and wash hands
-  Avoid close contact with anyone that has fever and cough

Source: WHO

Protect others from getting sick 

-  Cover mouth and nose with tissue, sleeve or elbow when coughing or sneezing
-  Throw tissue into closed bin after use
-  Clean hands after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick

Source: WHO

Protect yourself and others from getting sick 

Wash your hands:

-  after toilet use
-  after coughing or sneezing
-  when caring for the sick
-  before, during and after you prepare food
-  when hands are visibly dirty
-  before eating
-  after handling animals or animal waste

Source: WHO

Protect others from getting sick 

-  **Avoid close contact** when you are experiencing cough and fever
-  **Avoid spitting** in public
-  If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing **seek medical care early** and **share previous travel history** with your health care provider

Source: WHO

When to use a mask 

-  If you are healthy, you need only to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection
-  Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing
-  Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-washing with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
-  If you wear a mask then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly

Source: WHO

Wash your hands 

-  Wash your hands with soap and running water when **hands are visibly dirty**
-  If your **hands are not visibly dirty**, frequently clean them by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

Source: WHO

Stay healthy while travelling 

-  **Avoid travel** if you have a fever and cough
-  If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing **seek medical care early**
-  Share previous travel history with your health provider

Source: WHO

Stay healthy while travelling 

-  **Avoid close contact** with people suffering from a fever and cough
-  Frequently **clean hands** by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
-  **Avoid touching** eyes, nose or mouth

Source: WHO

Stay healthy while travelling 

-  Eat only **well-cooked food**
-  **Avoid spitting** in public
-  **Avoid close contact and travel** with animals that are sick

Source: WHO

Stay healthy while travelling 

-  When coughing and sneezing **cover mouth and nose** with flexed elbow or tissue - throw tissue away immediately and wash hands
-  If you choose to wear a face mask, be sure to cover mouth and nose - avoid touching mask once it's on
-  Immediately discard single-use mask after each use and wash hands after removing masks

Source: WHO

Stay healthy while travelling 

-  If you become sick while travelling, **inform crew and seek medical care early**
-  If you seek medical attention, **share travel history with your health care provider**

Source: WHO

Practise food safety 

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- Even in **areas experiencing outbreaks**, meat products can be safely consumed if these items are **cooked thoroughly** and properly handled during food preparation

Source: WHO