

# NOVEL CORONAVIRUS REFERENCE GUIDE



**AS THE CONCERN AROUND COVID-19 INCREASES, YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO US. TO ASSIST, MHR HAS COMPILED THE FOLLOWING USEFUL REFERENCE GUIDE TO INFORM AND EQUIP THE COMMUNITY. IN LIGHT OF THIS, WE URGE THE PUBLIC TO TAKE THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS. WE ALSO ENCOURAGE ANYONE EXPERIENCING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF FLU OR WHO THINKS THAT THEY MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE VIRUS TO CONTACT THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER OR CALL THE MEDICLINIC COVID-19 HOTLINE NUMBER ON 0860 24 00 24.**

## WHAT IS THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK?

COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease) refers to the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. SARS-CoV-2 refers to a new strain of the coronavirus that has not previously been detected in humans. Due to the widespread global transmission COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

## WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS?

Coronavirus is a large family of viruses, common throughout the world, which are responsible for the 'common cold' and usually cause self-limiting upper respiratory tract infections. There are many different coronaviruses identified in animals, but only a small number of these can cause disease in humans. Sometimes coronaviruses infecting animals can evolve to cause disease in humans and become a new (novel) coronavirus in humans. Examples of this include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), first reported in Saudi Arabia in 2012, and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV), which emerged from China in 2002.

On 9 January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that a new coronavirus was identified in China associated with an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan City in the Hubei Province. This virus is called SARS-CoV-2.

## WHO IS AT RISK FOR COVID-19?

Those who have travelled to countries where there are widespread community transmission, or have been in contact with somebody with COVID-19.

## HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

The virus can be spread by droplets when someone who has the virus coughs or sneezes on you. Generally if you are more than 2 meters away, the droplets won't reach you, and should not be able to infect you. However, those droplets can land on surfaces, like a table, or a door handle, or any other surface. It can survive on the surface for a long time, and if you touch that surface with the virus, and then touch your face, especially your eyes, mouth or nose, you could become infected.

Reduce the risk by reducing personal contact (e.g. shaking hands) and cleaning your hands before touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and after coughing or sneezing.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Most people who get this disease will have very mild symptoms, like having a cold. However some people who have other illnesses, such as heart disease, chronic lung diseases or kidney diseases may become sicker.

People who develop COVID-19 generally have the following symptoms

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Muscle aches

In very severe cases, people who have the infection might start to have difficulties breathing, or feel very short of breath. If this happens, they should go to the hospital.

## HOW IS THE DIAGNOSIS OF COVID-19 CONFIRMED?

Laboratory testing is mainly done on respiratory samples from your throat collected using swabs inserted into the nose and mouth. Additional blood specimens might also be tested, as well as sputum. The results of the test take about 24 - 48 hours before it is published. Your treating doctor will inform you about the results.

## HOW IS COVID-19 INFECTION TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for a viral respiratory infection and symptomatic treatment may be suggested (e.g. for reducing fever or sore throat). If more severe, it may be necessary for some patients to be treated in hospital (e.g. if they require oxygen for shortness of breath). Antibiotics should not be used to treat a viral infection and would only be necessary if there is a secondary bacterial infection.

### WHERE WILL I BE ADMITTED IF I HAVE COVID-19?

The Department of Health has designated specific hospitals, as not all facilities in the public sector have the ability to isolate patients. Should you visit a private hospital (including a Mediclinic hospital), the hospital will be able to assist and treat you.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE THE VIRUS?

If you have been in contact with somebody with COVID-19 or travelled to an area where there is currently an outbreak, are feeling sick, and have mild symptoms, stay at home – do not go to school or to public places. Get plenty of rest, and stay hydrated by drinking enough fluids. Practice good cough etiquette when coughing or sneezing. Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. If you feel short of breath, or have difficulty breathing, go to the nearest hospital. Please phone ahead and inform the hospital/clinic that you are coming. If you are coughing wear a face mask to prevent transmission to other patients and health-care workers.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF A PATIENT PRESENTS AT HOSPITAL WITH THE VIRUS?

Our standard processes routinely assess travel history as well as respiratory illness history so that the associated risks can be managed. All patients being admitted via Emergency Centres or into the hospital for planned admissions will be asked specific questions at reception and then clinically assessed as necessary. If necessary, a specific protocol will then be followed to confirm whether testing is indicated and the care required will be assessed. In most cases, hospitalisation will not be necessary, and patients will be able to self-quarantine and recover at home. Patients who require hospital admission will be nursed in separate (isolation) rooms to reduce the risk of spread to other vulnerable patients and staff will wear masks etc. for protection whilst caring for affected patients. Protocols relating to care of patients with diseases and infections are part of routine processes and align with evidence-based guidelines within our hospitals.

### HOW CAN COVID-19 INFECTION IN HUMANS BE PREVENTED?

Because the virus is spread by droplets and touching surfaces that have been exposed to the virus, you should do the following to prevent getting infected:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water – normal soap and water is enough to kill the virus, you don't need special antibacterial soaps

- If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol hand gel or liquid that contains at least 60% alcohol – the alcohol in the gel will be enough to kill the virus
- Do not touch your face if you have not washed your hands
- Practice good cough etiquette – don't use your hands to cover your mouth or nose when you cough or sneeze – use the crook of your elbow, or a tissue when coughing and sneezing, and throw the tissue away after you have used it. Then you need to wash your hands
- Avoid spending time with people who are sick – sick people should stay at home
- If you are in a public area, try to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from other people
- Avoid shaking hands or hugging other people if they are sick

### DO YOU NEED TO WEAR A FACEMASK TO PREVENT GETTING SICK?

No. Facemasks are only to be used by people who are sick, or medical personnel. Wearing a facemask if you are not sick does not protect you as well as washing your hands.

### SHOULD I BE SOCIAL-DISTANCING?

There is a process for reporting and follow up of all suspected and positive cases in the community, and where necessary such action is necessary as a means to reduce transmission. As with any respiratory infection, those who are ill should stay at home so that they do not infect others. It is encouraged and vital that everyone should wash their hands regularly.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED TO BE TESTED FOR COVID-19?

Mediclinic has a handy online information tool to assist you in understanding your need to be assessed for COVID-19. You can access it here or by visiting [www.mediclinic.co.za](http://www.mediclinic.co.za)

**You can also call the Mediclinic COVID-19 Hotline number on 0860 24 00 24.**