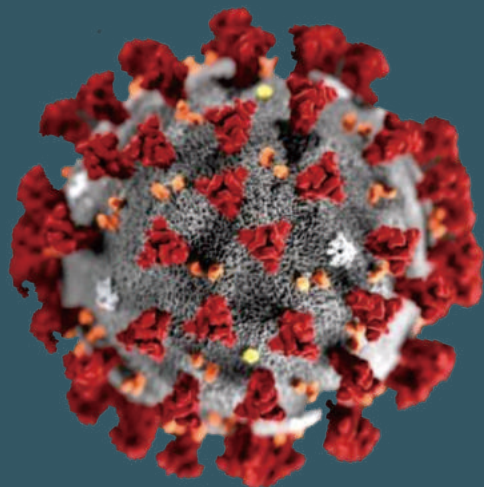


COVID-19

INFORMATION SHEET



WHAT IS COVID-19 ?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)¹ is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. It can affect lungs and airways.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS ?

The symptoms² of COVID-19 are :

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. The symptoms are similar to the other illnesses that are much more common, such as common cold and flu.

In more severe cases, COVID-19 can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.



FEVER



COUGH



SHORTNESS OF BREATH

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, FLU AND COLD

	DRY COUGH	FEVER	RUNNY NOSE	SORE THROAT	BREATH LESSNESS	HEADACHE	BODY ACHES	SNEEZE	FATIGUE	DIARRHOEA
COVID-19	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	~	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	~	✓✓	~
FLU	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✗	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✗	✓✓✓	✓✓
COLD	✓	~	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✗	~	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✗

✓✓✓	FREQUENTLY
✓✓	SOMETIMES
✓	LITTLE
~	RARE
✗	NOT

NCDs and COVID-19³

People of all ages can be infected by COVID-19. However, older people and people with pre-existing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are more vulnerable to become severely ill. The NCDs include:

- Cardiovascular diseases (e.g. hypertension, persons who have had, or are at risk for, a heart attack or stroke)
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Chronic respiratory disease (e.g. COPD)

Tobacco use is a major risk factor for a range of above-mentioned underlying medical conditions that increase COVID-19 risk and severity

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR ?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)⁴, the incubation period for COVID-19 is somewhere between **2 to 14** days after exposure.

HOW IT SPREADS

Like the flu, COVID-19 can be transmitted from person to person. Scientific evidence confirms that COVID-19 is spread by droplets. When an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, he/she may generate droplets containing the virus. These droplets are too large to stay in the air for long, so they quickly settle on surrounding surfaces. People may get infected by the virus if they touch those surfaces or objects and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes. That is why it is important to use good hygiene, regularly wash and thoroughly dry your hands, and use good cough and sneeze etiquette.



STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Although there is no vaccine currently available to prevent infection with the new coronavirus, you can take the following precautions to prevent COVID-19:

- Frequently wash hands, use sanitizer if soap is not available
- Wear a face mask in public even if you feel well
- Avoid crowded places and practice safe distancing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- If you feel sick, see a doctor

SAFE DISTANCING

Safe distancing is a highly recommended and effective tool for preventing the spread of COVID-19. It can include large-scale measures, like cancelling group events or closing public spaces, as well as personal decisions such as remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance from others when possible.

YOU MUST SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION WHEN

- You have returned from overseas in the past 14 days and you have developed respiratory illness with or without fever.
- You have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case in the past 14 days and you develop respiratory illness with or without fever.
- You have severe community-acquired pneumonia and there is no clear cause.
- You are a healthcare worker who works directly with patients and you have a respiratory illness and a fever.

TESTING

- To test for COVID-19, your doctor may take samples, including a sample of saliva (sputum), a nasal swab and a throat swab, to send to a lab for testing. It may take a few days for the test results to come back.
- At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, medical care includes treatment of the symptoms⁵.
- If your doctor says you are well enough to go home while waiting for test results, you should self-isolate at home and do not attend work or school to ensure you do not spread to others.
- If you have serious symptoms, you will be kept in hospital and isolated from other patients as a precaution to prevent the spreading of the virus.
- Once discharged from the hospital, 14 days of further isolation at the patient's home with regular health monitoring (e.g. follow-up visits, phone calls) can be considered. However, the patient needs to take all necessary precautions (e.g. single room with good ventilation, face-mask wear, reduce close contact with family members, separate meals, good hand sanitation, no outdoor activities) in order to protect further spreading of COVID-19.



TOBACCO, VAPING AND COVID-19

- Tobacco smoking, vaping or using e-cigarettes is harmful to the bodily systems, including the cardiovascular and respiratory systems.
- There is an increased risk of more serious symptoms and death among COVID-19 patients that have underlying cardiovascular and respiratory diseases⁶.
- This relation between COVID-19 and cardiovascular and respiratory health is important because tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke are major causes of CVDs globally.
- Smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 as the act of smoking means that fingers (and possibly contaminated cigarettes) are in contact with lips which increases the possibility of transmission of the virus from hand to mouth.
- Smoking products such as water pipes often involve the sharing of mouthpieces and hoses, which could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19 in communal and social settings.



ROLE OF MAYORS

- Engage with key partners to develop sub-national preparedness and response plans including issuing travel notices.
- Implement risk communication and community engagement plans for COVID-19.
- Sensitize the public to their active role in the response to COVID-19 and health promotion during the pandemic.
- Use a consistent mechanism to communicate about prevention and control measures and engage with media, public health and community-based networks, local governments and NGOs, and other sectors.
- Promote culturally appropriate and empathetic community engagement to detect and rapidly respond to public perceptions and counter misinformation.
- Enhance hospital and community preparedness plans; ensure space, staffing, and supplies are adequate for a possible surge inpatient care needs.
- Establish metrics and monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of measures.
- Document lessons learned to inform on-going and future preparedness and response activities.
- Prevent industry interference to promote tobacco, vaping, e-cigarettes, etc. even in these times of public health emergencies on international concern.
- Ensure implementation of smoke-free in all public places, workplaces, and public transport.
- Ensure the language used when discussing COVID-19 does not stigmatize against people affected by COVID-19 or specific communities.

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

- Enacting and amending legislation
- Approving budgets and mobilizing resources
- Providing oversight to ensure government accountability and transparency
- Encouraging multisectoral action
- Ensuring national implementation as per the best practices and WHO recommendations
- Fostering the participation of constituencies and engaging in international partnerships
- Ensuring implementation of tobacco control, NCD prevention and other essential primary health care programs such as tuberculosis control

ROLE OF HEALTH SYSTEM

- Develop preparedness checklists for health systems
- Provide guidance for personal protective equipment – PPE (such as gowns, gloves, face-masks) supply planning, health care system screening, and infection control
- Leverage existing telehealth tools to redirect the person to the right level of care
- Define rationale and criteria for use of social distancing measures such as cancellation of mass gathering and/or school closure
- Prioritize urgent and emergency visits of the healthcare workers and clinicians during the pandemic to ensure quality care and service
- Delay/reschedule all elective ambulatory and non-urgent admissions
- Delay inpatient and outpatient elective surgical and procedural cases
- Postpone routine dental and eye-care visits
- Understand the patient's co-morbid condition(s) to tailor the management of critical illness and appreciate the prognosis
- Communicate early with patient and family

ROLE OF COMMUNITY

- Follow the good hygiene practices
- Wear a face mask in public even if you feel well
- See a doctor/ health care worker promptly when you are sick
- Encourage social distancing and regular hand washing
- Avoid non-essential travels
- Comply with the measures and orders issued by Ministry of Health
- Do not use tobacco, vape or e-cigarettes
- Regular monitoring of reliable news to avoid spreading of rumours

Practice healthy lifestyle :

A healthy lifestyle will make all bodily functions work better, including immunity. Eating healthy diets, with plenty of fruit and vegetables, keeping physically active, quitting smoking, limiting or avoiding alcohol intake, and getting enough sleep are key components of a healthy lifestyle.

ROLE OF MEDIA

- **Be First:** Quickly sharing accurate evidence-based information about a disease outbreak can help stop the spread of disease and prevent illness and even death.
- **Be Right:** Accuracy establishes credibility. Disseminating health messages may not only raise awareness but also promote behavioural change. Information should include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the information gaps (See more on **WHO Health Alert messaging service**).
- **Be Credible:** Honesty, timeliness, and scientific evidence encourage the public to trust your information and guidance. Avoid using inaccurate websites or resources. Acknowledge when you do not have enough information to answer a question and then work with the appropriate experts to get an answer.
- **Be Empathetic :** Disease outbreak can cause fear and disrupt daily lives. Lesser-known or emerging diseases cause more uncertainty and anxiety. Acknowledging what people are feeling and their challenges shows that you are considering their perspectives when you give recommendations.
- **Be Action Oriented :** In an infectious disease outbreak, public understanding of, and action on, disease prevention is key to stopping the spread.
 - Keep action messages simple, short, and easy to remember, like “cover your cough”.
 - Promote action messages in different ways to make sure they reach to all.
 - Do not focus on individual patient behaviour to reduce stigma.
 - Actively listen to the issues and solutions brought up by local communities and local leadership.
- **Be Respectful :** Deferential communication is important as it promotes cooperation and rapport when people feel vulnerable and fragile at the time of health emergencies.

Please refer to WHO media guidelines for more information :

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronavirus/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf>

LESSONS LEARNT FROM SINGAPORE

As soon as China announced its outbreak, Singapore applied effective measures to prevent and control COVID-19.

Reduce the risk of Importation of cases

- Imposing travel restrictions and border controls to stem the inflow of travellers to the country and later prohibiting all non-essential travel abroad.
- Screening of temperature, testing of swab and health checks at border checkpoints.

Minimising the risk of Transmission

- Strengthening border checks to detect and isolate cases before they come into contact with the family and community.
- Encouraging voluntary home quarantine to limit the spread of the virus in the community.
- Putting all confirmed cases of COVID-19 in hospital or quarantine accommodation even if symptoms are mild.
- Discouraging 'Doctor Hopping'. People should consult the same doctor for follow-up visits.
- Suspending all religious services and congregations, mass gathering such as conferences, concerts, sporting events, and temporary closure of entertain venues and cinema.
- Limiting visitors in shopping malls, eateries and post offices, and limiting gatherings outside of work and school to 10 persons or less.
- Urging seniors to take extra precaution to avoid crowded places and only go out for essential tasks.
- Encouraging employers to adopt telecommuting, stagger work hours and let staff work from home .
- Implementing full Home-Based Learning (HBL) for all schools.
- Encouraging online order for food, groceries and other services.

Safe distancing

- Mandating a distance of 1 meter (3.2 feet) away from each other in public places.

Robust contact tracing and surveillance system

- Conducting epidemiological investigations, contact tracing and quarantining of close contacts, to prevent further spread and to preserve healthcare capacity to care for the more severe cases.
- Tracing movements of the COVID-19 patients for the last 14 days and issuing a Stay at Home Notice (SHN) for everyone who came in contact with. These individuals cannot leave their house for 14 days or invite visitors.
- Issuing a Leave of Absence (LOA)⁷ to those who return from overseas from lower risk countries. They may leave the house only for essential tasks such as groceries.
- Launched Smartphone app called **TraceTogether** to make contact tracing more efficient using Bluetooth connections.⁸

Emphasis on Social Responsibility and good personal hygiene

- Organizing educational campaigns and widespread public placement information on how to prevent spread of COVID-19 (e.g. lifts, bus stops, parks, malls).
- Launching of SG Clean Campaigns to promote good public hygiene <http://www.gov.sg/article/covid-19-resources>
- Introducing stay safe with the 5Ms; **manage** my health, **maintain** clean hands, **minimise** contact, **mask** up when unwell, **monitor** the news <http://www.gov.sg/article/how-i-do-protect-myself-and-my-family>
- Implementing a system of mandatory travel declarations, temperature monitoring, cleaning and reducing capacity for all patrons and staff by businesses.

Transparent and effective daily communication

- Updating public on daily basis on numbers of confirmed cases, whether or not the cases are linked or unlinked, number of patients in hospital, number of patients in ICU, number of patients discharged, new regulations, clarifications on false rumours and other essential reminders or information.⁹

Organised leadership

- Clearly defined roles and united messaging from all leaders.¹⁰
- Launching of “SGUnited” a one-stop platform, bringing together various community-lead COVID-19 responses and encouraging Singaporeans to show appreciation to those fighting to keep the outbreak under control.¹¹
- Ensuring free testing and free treatment.

Enforcement

- SHN is strictly enforced with random calls, visits and GPS tracking. Those who fail to comply with the SHN may face the following penalties¹²:
 - Any person guilty of an offence under Section 21A of the Infectious Diseases Act shall (a) in the case of a first offence, be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both; and (b) in the case of a second or subsequent offence, be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$20,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.
 - Foreign workers may have their work passes revoked and be repatriated. Employers may have their work pass privileges withdrawn.
 - Students may face disciplinary actions, including suspension or dismissal, from their schools or institutions.
 - PR and long-term pass holders may have their Re-Entry Permit or passes revoked or the validity shortened.
- Non-compliance to the safe distancing measures is an offence under the Infectious Diseases Act. Penalties for non-compliance include a fine of up to S\$10,000 or imprisonment of up to six months or both.

For more detailed information on Singapore's COVID-19 response and useful resources, please visit <https://www.gov.sg/feat/features/covid-19>¹³

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the whatsapp number

Have questions about **COVID-19**? We have answers
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APCAT was established in 2016 by The Union Asia Pacific Office in Singapore as a network and forum for subnational leaders working to advance tobacco control and prevent NCDs in the region. Members include representatives from **65 cities in 12 countries** with support from Ministries of Health in Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Nepal, Bloomberg Philanthropies and The Union. The Union is the permanent Secretariat of APCAT. www.theunion.org

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