

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) TALKING POINTS

I. BASIC DISEASE INFORMATION

1. WHAT IS A NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

A novel coronavirus (CoV) means a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe disease such as the Middle East Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

2. WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel corona virus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

3. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS/SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 AND WHEN DO THEY APPEAR?

COVID-19 causes respiratory symptoms, similar to other respiratory diseases like influenza (flu). Having the symptoms does not necessarily mean you have the disease.

In most cases, COVID-19 causes mild symptoms including runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever. It can be more severe for some people and can lead to pneumonia or breathing difficulties. In some cases, infection can lead to death.

Symptoms for COVID-19 range from mild symptoms, through to people becoming severely ill. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

WHO estimates that the symptoms of COVID-19 may appear between 1-14 days after a person has been exposed to the virus.

4. HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

COVID-19 appears to spread most easily through close contact with an infected person. When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, small droplets are released and, if you are too close, you can breathe in the virus.

A person may also get infected if they touch feces, a surface or object (like a door handle or table) that has the virus on it and then touch their mouth or face.

Generally, the virus is only spread when a person is in close contact with a sick person, for example living in the same household or workplace.

Facilitators: Traditional Leaders, Church Leaders, Civil Society Leaders (Women's groups and other interested organizations); these COVID-19 Talking Points are issued by the FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs for public use.

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5. WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

People of all ages can be infected with the virus. However elder people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill.

6. WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR COVID-19?

There is no currently available treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated.

II. ADVICE TO THE PUBLIC

1. WHAT SHOULD THE PUBLIC DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES?

Whilst there are currently no cases of COVID-19 in the FSM, it is important that people always practice some simple hygiene measures. This will help to protect a person from many diseases, including COVID-19.

- **Wash your hands frequently.** Wash your hands with soap and water or, if your hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This will remove the virus if it is on your hands.
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue when coughing and sneezing.** Throw away the used tissue immediately and wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This way you protect others from any virus released through coughs and sneezes.
- **If possible, keep a distance of at least 3 feet between yourself and someone who is coughing, sneezing or has a fever.** COVID-19 appears to spread most easily through close contact with an infected person.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.** Hands touch many surfaces which can be contaminated with the virus. If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your unclean hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.
- **If you have a fever, cough AND difficulty breathing, seek medical care. Contact your state's health care centers to get further instructions.** If you exhibit such symptoms it is advised that you confine yourself at home, refrain from moving about in the community and await further instructions until the health screening visits you. Always follow the guidance of your health care professional or national health advisories.

2. SHOULD I BE WEARING A MASK?

A well person does not need to wear a mask, unless they are taking care of a person who is suspected to have COVID-19. If a person has COVID-19, they should wear a mask, especially if they are coughing or sneezing.

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However, using a mask alone will not stop infections and must be combined with other prevention measures including hand and respiratory hygiene and avoiding close contact – at least 1-meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and other people.

WHO advises on rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and potential misuse of masks. This is critical as we need to ensure that there are enough masks available for our health care workers, who are most at risk as they will be providing direct care to a patient, in close settings (at home or in a healthcare facility).

III. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

1. WHAT IS THE FSM DOING TO PREPARE FOR THE CURRENT THREAT OF COVID-19?

The FSM has scaled up their preparedness and operational readiness measures to ensure early detection and rapid response to potential cases of COVID-19. This includes strengthening surveillance systems to rapidly detect cases at points of entry, ensuring that rapid response teams are ready to respond if cases are identified, that laboratory systems are identified to assist with testing suspected cases and other public health responses are in place to contain the spread of the virus.

2. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MEASURES THE FSM IS DOING TO STOP THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS, IF A CASE IS IMPORTED?

As part of the FSM's preparedness to respond to potential imported cases of COVID-19, isolation and quarantine facilities are being identified. Isolation and quarantine are standard public health measures taken to protect the public by stopping or limiting the spread of a contagious disease, like COVID-19.

3. WHAT IS QUARANTINE?

Quarantine is a state of isolating oneself for a period to help stop the spread of an infectious disease. This means that a well person, who has been in contact with a person with COVID-19, isolates themselves to help stop the spread of the disease, in case they become sick.

Being in quarantine means you must stay at home, or in your hotel room or place of residence. People from outside your household, including family and friends should not visit you.

Do not go to:

- Work, preschool, school, university
- Church or other places of worship
- Social or sports activities (including gyms, shopping malls and movies)
- Supermarkets and food venues, such as restaurants, cafes, takeaways and food markets.

4. WHY DO I NEED TO STAY IN QUARANTINE?

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Staying in quarantine is important because if you are getting sick with COVID-19, you can spread it to others even before you feel sick or show symptoms.

5. HOW LONG TO I STAY IN QUARANTINE?

You should stay in quarantine for 14 days after you were potentially exposed to the virus. The public health officer from the your respective state's Department of Health Services will give you a specific date of when you are no longer required to be in quarantine.

6. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE?

Isolation separates sick people with the disease from people who are not sick. **Quarantine** separates people who are well but may have been exposed to the virus to monitor if they become sick.

7. WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO COMMUNITIES LIVING NEARY QUARANTINE FACILITIES?

Because quarantined individuals are restricted from moving outside the facility, there is no evidence to suggest that surrounding communities could be exposed to the virus. The virus spreads primarily when a person is in close contact with a sick person, for example living in the same household or workplace.

IV. PUBLIC PERCEPTION & MISINFORMATION

1. HOW WORRIED SHOULD PEOPLE BE ABOUT COVID-19?

In past outbreaks, fear and distrust have hampered – not helped – outbreak response and contributed to reduced interactions with countries experiencing widespread transmission, including with the provision of resources and economic activities. Health workers returning from affected countries have also faced stigmatization.

Solidarity, not stigma, is what is needed to support countries and those in need in communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. In past disease outbreaks, this type of discrimination and stigma prevented sick individuals seeking medical attention or reporting their sickness, which caused further transmission of the disease and more deaths.

2. RUMORS AND MISINFORMATION

During times of uncertainty, rumors and misinformation can spread quickly and be harmful to government's response measures and to individuals. The FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs will continue to release timely and reliable guidance to the community and encourages people to please make sure any information they pass on has been confirmed by the FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs, each respective state Department of Health services or WHO.

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You can also assist prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reporting and suspected or rumored cases to your respective health care COVID-19 response lines – Chuuk (330-2214), Kosrae (370-3012), Pohnpei (320-3107) and Yap (350-2110)

V. TRAVEL BAN/RESTRICTION INQUIRIES

Should you have any questions or inquiries on the travel ban and/or other restrictions related to the FSM's preparation of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), please call **Mr. Moses Pretrick, (691) 320-8300** or **(691) 920-4715**

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