Frequently Asked Questions WBG/IMF Contractors in Country Offices/Overseas Offices

This document has been produced to provide guidance to contracting staff working within Country Offices/Overseas Offices, in relation to the current COVID-19 situation.

Masks & Cloth Face Coverings

Should I use a facemask?

The use of surgical masks is known to be effective when used by sick persons to prevent the infection of others in a home or other nursing environment. Higher specification N-95 (or equivalent) masks should be reserved for the protection of medical personnel or other high-risk occupations who may have prolonged close contact with sick persons, and need specific training and fit testing for effective use.

Some national and local health authorities require people to wear masks in public places and may even enforce this. You should follow local requirements in such locations.

With increased recognition of the possible role in transmission of asymptomatic infection and the fact that the virus is now present in communities throughout the world, some authorities (including the U.S. CDC) are now recommending more widespread use of cloth face coverings by all persons who may be in public places where it is difficult to maintain social distancing (e.g. when out shopping, or using public transport). This is not for protection of the wearer, but rather to limit the spread of respiratory droplets from the wearer to others. Medical masks (either surgical or N-95) should be reserved for the applications described above. The CDC guidance for public use of cloth face coverings by asymptomatic persons can be found here.

Staff who use masks or cloth face coverings when not sick and in public places should always prioritize other preventive measures such as washing their hands often with soap and water and staying away from other people when they are sick. Incorrect use of masks and cloth face coverings can increase the risk of infection. Further information can be found below:

- WHO: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks
- CDC: Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

If I have a mask, or a cloth face covering, how do I safely use it?

If you decide to wear a mask or cloth face covering, it is important to use it properly, so you do not increase your risk for infection.

Wash your hands with soap and water before putting on the mask/covering. If soap and water are not immediately available, use hand sanitizer. Place the mask/covering carefully over your face and fit it around your nose and under your chin. A medical mask may have a small adjustable metal bar at the top and will provide a better fit.
Once the mask/covering is on your face, do not touch it or adjust it. If you are wearing a fabric mask, be aware that it will become damp as you wear it for longer periods of time, and it will need to be carefully removed.

Wash your hands before removing the mask/covering. Remove the mask/covering and place it in a receptacle. Wash your hands again.

If you intend to reuse the mask:

- Disposable mask: store it in a clean plastic or paper bag or hang it on a hook away from other objects. However, if it has viral particles on it, it will contaminate the inside of the bag and could contaminate your hands and face next time you wear it.
- Cloth face covering: wash it in hot water daily when you wear it and dry it on a hot setting or hang it in the sun.

Testing

**NEW Apr. 23  Can I be tested for COVID-19?**

Your healthcare provider will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. **The WBG does not have preferential access to testing, nor are there WBG doctors who can prescribe testing.** In most places, testing cannot be requested by people who are not sick, or who are wanting reassurance that they do not have COVID-19. Although a few countries at this time may be doing wider screening tests, testing is generally done on people with symptoms. In areas where there is a shortage of tests, priority may be given to those that are hospitalized, in a higher risk category, or frontline healthcare workers, and their main use is to inform decisions on isolation and contact tracing, to guide appropriate infection control procedures in the hospital, and to track the spread of the outbreak in a community.

For those living outside the U.S., in general, testing is under the control of local health authorities and requires a doctor’s referral. Individuals should consult with their doctor.

Testing does not change the medical treatment you will receive, as there is no specific treatment for COVID-19. All individuals with less severe symptoms of illness should self-isolate at home and monitor their condition carefully, whether they have a COVID-19 test or not. If symptoms worsen, you should consult with your healthcare provider.

**NEW Apr. 23  Can I be tested to see if I have had COVID-19 and am immune?**

Tests for past infection with COVID-19 (called antibody tests or serology tests) are very new and most of them have not been validated for accuracy. Any use of these tests needs to be approached with caution right now, as they do not offer clear results. Even those tests which are validated may have a high rate of false positive or false negative results, meaning they cannot accurately tell you if you were infected with COVID-19 in the past.

Doctors and researchers also do not know whether having antibodies against COVID-19 provides protection against future infection, and if so, for how long. This will take time and research to determine.
About COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?

It spreads through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This happens most directly when someone is in close contact with an infected person (within 2 meters/6 feet). It may also occur by touching infected surfaces.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever (38.0 C/100.4 F or higher)
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue

Other symptoms such as sore throat, and gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present. Symptoms may be mild to severe and can appear from 1 to 14 days after exposure.

How do I prevent myself from becoming infected?

- Avoid contact with people who are ill with fever or cough;
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and properly (for at least 20 seconds);
- Become "touch aware." Be mindful of surfaces you are touching (door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, etc.) and wash your hands appropriately afterwards. Try not to touch your face;
- When coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same;
- In areas with community spread, practice social distancing. Avoid crowded areas or large gatherings to the extent possible.

What does social distancing mean?

In communities with sustained community spread, a number of practices outside of the workplace are being suggested to minimize risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19. It is all our individual responsibilities to implement these:

- Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people;
- Avoid visiting elderly relatives if possible. People over 65 are at greater risk of severe disease. If possible, minimize exposure of elderly relatives to additional people. If you must visit, practice good hygiene and do not take your children. Connect virtually using your phones/computers;
• Have your children practice social distancing. Minimize/stop playdates, if they are playing at the park, encourage them to keep at least 2 meters/6 feet from other children. About 13% of cases in children are asymptomatic;

• If restaurants are open, do not dine in. Get takeout and when you get home, remove the packaging and throw it away. Wash your hands thoroughly again before eating;

• Do not visit friends/throw private parties. Rather consider going for a walk with individual friends (keeping 2 meters/6 feet apart) in the open air. This reduces the risk of transmission between adults;

• Do not have contractors/friends in your home other than in an absolute emergency;

• Avoid malls and shopping trips other than for essential items;

• Try and visit the grocery store at off-peak periods or when it is quieter. In some areas, grocery stores are limiting the number of people in the store. When standing in line try and maintain your 2 meter/6 foot separation distance. Wash your hands thoroughly when returning home;

• Minimize use of public transportation if you can. If you need to use public transportation, use during off-peak times. Avoid being in cars/buses with lots of people. If you are able, use a private car.

What does a global pandemic mean?

The shift from an epidemic to a pandemic expands the focus from individual containment measures (quarantine and isolation of the sick) to widescale community mitigation (minimizing the impact through public health) measures. Mitigation methods may include limitations of mass gatherings and public events, school closures and strengthening public health systems and hospitals. In some cases, mitigations may include curfews and movement restrictions.

• Have essential supplies in the home (planning for two weeks is a useful guide), including adequate supplies of prescription and over-the-counter medications;

• Continue to get your information from credible and trustworthy sources, such as WHO, CDC, and your local health department.

What should I do if I have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case?

If you know that have you been in close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 (a colleague or anyone outside of work) you should stay at home and avoid contact with others for a period of 14 days from the last known contact with the ill person.

If living with someone who is sick with COVID-19 do not go to work and practice social distancing for a period of 14 days after the sick individual is declared free of infection. Follow instructions for minimizing your exposure outlined by the U.S. CDC. If living with someone sick with COVID-19, local public health authorities should give you guidance on when you will be able to end your self-isolation.
What practical steps can I take to address my anxiety about this situation?

It is natural to worry about things that might happen in the future. A practical step you can take is to consider your current health needs and how you can best protect your health and that of your family. Ensure that you have an adequate supply of any prescription medications you or your family members need, know where to go to seek medical care, practice good hygiene such as washing hands frequently, use good cough etiquette, and avoid touching your face, particularly when out in public and if you or family members are sick. It is also good practice to always have a personal/family emergency plan and review this regularly, as well as having a home emergency kit in place that includes food and water that can be stored in the event of an inability to go out from your home for a period of time.

What should I do if I am sick?

Stay home and away from others. Your actions make a difference in limiting the spread of illness.

Use good hygiene to prevent spreading your illness to others. Cover your mouth with a tissue or with your flexed elbow when coughing and sneezing. Wash your hands afterwards.

In addition, if you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and live in/have traveled in an affected location in the last 14 days:

- Seek medical care/contact your healthcare provider.
- Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your symptoms and recent travel.
- If you must go out, wear a surgical mask if you have one.

What do I do when at home and avoiding contact with others?

1. Practice social distancing:
   - Restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care;
   - Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transportation or taxis;
   - Avoid sharing household items if someone in the household is sick;
   - Only people who normally live in the household should be at home.

2. Practice respiratory hygiene (when coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same);

3. Reduce boredom during self-isolation by trying to keep up a normal daily routine as far as possible.
NEW Apr. 21 Can I safely gather with my family or community for religious or other events?

Everyone has a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and a responsibility to protect others in their family and community, particularly the most vulnerable. Any meeting/gathering of people should be undertaken only if authorized by the local public health authority AND when there is no ongoing spread of COVID-19 in your community. Anyone who does not live in the same house as you poses a potential risk, even if they are family members. Remember that if you are exposed to someone who then develops COVID-19, you are at risk of developing COVID-19 and will need to go into quarantine (isolate yourself from all others for 14 days).

We do not recommend gathering with family members or friends who do not live in the same house. If you choose to participate in a larger gathering, please read the General Guidance for Gatherings of Families or Communities and maintain a 2-meter/6-foot distance from one another. If you are celebrating Ramadan, the WHO has also issued Safe Ramadan Practices in the Context of COVID-19.

If you or any of the participants in a gathering become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, tiredness, aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea) after the gathering, anyone who was in contact with or around that person in the 2 days before symptoms started needs to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days.

For information on how to limit the spread of COVID-19, please review guidance from the WHO and the U.S. CDC.