
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.

Supplementary to national guidance, the Health & Safety Directorate (HSD) recommends the following for contractors entering and working in WBG/IMF Buildings within Country Offices/Overseas Offices.

General Preventive Measures

The following precautions to prevent illness are valid at all times in all places.

- Avoid contact with others who are ill with fever or coughing.
- Proper handwashing prevents the spread of illness. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after using the toilet, before eating, and before touching your mouth or eyes. If no soap is available use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap.
- Avoid crowded areas or large gatherings to the extent possible. Do not go out if you are sick.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked animal products. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods. These are good food safety practices at any time.

The Use of Face Masks in the Community by Healthy Persons

Neither the World Health Organization (WHO) nor the U.S. CDC recommends wearing a mask for protection against illness in a community setting, as there is no strong evidence that these prevent infection when used by healthy people in public settings. However, attitudes towards wearing masks differ across the globe. In some countries (including China) the public health authorities are recommending and even enforcing the use of surgical masks when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. Contractors in these countries should follow these local recommendations.

- As masks alone are not effective protection, those who are required or choose to use masks should always follow the more effective general protective measures above.
- **WHO: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks**

**Note:** Surgical masks can prevent the infection of others when used by sick people.
What to Do If You Are Sick

- **Symptoms:** Primary symptoms are fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, and difficulty breathing, though patients may have varying degrees of these symptoms. While the incubation period is thought to be between 1 and 14 days, much remains unknown about the virus, including the original source and how easily it is transmitted.

- Follow local public health authority advice and guidance, including about specific hospitals or doctors where you should seek medical care.

- Those with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should avoid others and practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or flexed elbow, and wash your hands), and seek medical care.

- People sick with respiratory illness should seek medical care. Contact your doctor or medical center and inform them of your symptoms and potential risk of exposure, including recent travel, so you can get instructions on where/how to receive medical review without exposing others. If you need to go out in public (e.g. to a medical appointment), wear a surgical mask to prevent infection of others.

- Caregivers of those from affected areas who are sick with respiratory illness should follow CDC guidance for preventing spread of illness or becoming ill themselves.

Frequently Asked Questions

**Updated Mar 18 - 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.

**Is this a global pandemic?**

Yes. On March 11, the WHO declared the current COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, given the virus has spread to two or more continents with sustained, person-to-person transmission. The shift from an epidemic to a pandemic is likely to expand the response focus from individual containment measures (quarantine and isolation of the sick) to also include widescale community mitigation (minimizing the impact through public health measures). Mitigation methods may include more extensive limitations of mass gatherings and public events, school closures and strengthening public health systems and hospitals. Employers may implement new business continuity measures, and remote work options are likely to be encouraged where possible.

**What does a global pandemic mean for myself, my family, and my work?**

The WHO's recent announcement does not change the existing health and safety guidance that has been issued at this time. However, we remind staff to consider the following:

- Working from home and/or having children home from school;
• 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. Beware of the "infodemic" which so often swirls through social media and news outlets during such times;

• If you are concerned about a serious chronic health condition and your potential risk, contact your health provider;

• Stay calm, focus on the many simple things you can do to reduce the risk of infection for yourself and your family, and follow the guidance of your local public health authority.

While it is always difficult to confront something new and uncertain, there are actions we can take to help stop the spread of germs, such as practicing good hygiene measures and following guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading illness to others. Remember, you don’t need to buy or have special equipment. Diligent practice of good personal hygiene, and social distancing (maintaining at least 2 meters (6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing) to the extent possible, will remain the most effective ways to reduce the risk of infection.

What are the symptoms?

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

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

How do I prevent 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), particularly before eating, before touching your mouth or eyes, and after using the toilet. If soap and water are not immediately available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
• Become “touch aware.” Be mindful of surfaces you are touching (door handles, elevator buttons, hand rails) and wash 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 tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same.
• Avoid crowded areas or large gatherings to the extent possible. Do not go out if you are sick.

When should I wear a face mask?

You should wear a face mask only if you are sick with a cough or fever and need to seek medical care, or anytime you are interacting with other people.

If local health authorities require people to wear masks in public places or if you are required to wear one in your office or residential building, then follow those local requirements.

Neither the WHO nor U.S. CDC recommends wearing a mask for protection in a community setting.

Those who are required to or choose to use masks should prioritize other preventive measures such as washing hands often with soap and water and staying away from other people when they are sick. Incorrect use of masks can increase the risk of infection. Further information on the use of masks can be found below:

• WHO: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks

Note: There is no strong evidence that face masks prevent infection when used by healthy people in public settings. The reasons for this may be that masks are often not used properly (fitted tightly around the nose and mouth); they do not protect against transmission of illness that may come from droplets entering the eyes; and people often unknowingly touch their faces and the outside of the mask, thereby transferring viral particles to their hands.

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

If you have been in close contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19 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 (and who is not hospitalized), you should not come to work for a period of 14 days after the sick individual is declared free of infection, and you should 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.