

Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19

Updated as at 1 April 2020

Medical Information

Q: What is 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses, with six of these viruses known to cause a range of illnesses from the common cold to the more serious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The COVID-19 was discovered in late December 2019 after an unusual cluster of pneumonia cases was noted in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China.

Q: How does the virus spread?

Detailed investigations are ongoing to determine what is the animal source of the virus, however the virus is spread from person to person through respiratory droplets, usually when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. A person may also get infected if they touch 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 an infected person, for example living in the same household or workplace.

Q: Should I worry about COVID-19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones. We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. Firstly, among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

Q: Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air.

Q: Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the period of transmission of COVID-19 and will continue to share updated findings.

Q: Can I catch COVID-19 from the faeces of someone with the disease?

The risk of catching COVID-19 from the faeces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in faeces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings. Because this is a risk, however, it is another reason to clean hands regularly, after using the bathroom and before eating.

Q: How long does the virus survive on surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment). If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Q: Who is at risk of developing severe illness?

While we are still learning about how COVID-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others

Q: How long does it take for a person to get sick, after they come are infected with the virus (the incubation period)?

The incubation period is the time between infection and the onset of clinical symptoms of disease. The incubation period for COVID-19 is currently estimated at between two to 14 days. While people are mostly infectious when they experience (flu-like) symptoms, it may be possible that people can transmit the virus without having any symptoms or before the symptoms appear. However, investigations are ongoing to determine this.

If people infected with COVID-19 are tested and diagnosed quickly and there is a rapid public health response undertaken to reduce the spread of the virus, the chance of further, continued spread of the virus in a community is likely to be low.

Q: What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

Q: How serious is COVID-19?

Like other respiratory illnesses, infection with COVID-19 can cause mild symptoms including a runny nose, sore throat, cough, and fever. For some people it can be more severe and can lead to pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as, diabetes and heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

Q: Can I catch COVID-19 from my pet?

While there has been one instance of a dog being infected in Hong Kong, to date, there is no evidence that a dog, cat or any pet can transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs,

sneezes, or speaks. To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly. WHO continues to monitor the latest research on this and other COVID-19 topics and will update as new findings are available.

Q: Should I be tested for COVID-19?

If you develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, cough and shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel any country or area affected by COVID-19, you should call the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and tell us about your recent travel, or contact with someone who has recently travelled. They will be able to inform you on next steps and also whether laboratory tests need to be undertaken. If you suspect COVID-19, it is important that you self-isolate at home or your hotel room and avoid public spaces or crowds.

Q: How do you test a person for COVID-19?

A: We have a Centre for Disease Control in Tamavua where testing is done.

Q: Is there a treatment for the disease caused by COVID-19?

To date, there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat the COVID-19. However, those infected with COVID-19 should receive appropriate care to relieve and treat symptoms, and those with severe illness should receive optimized supportive care. Supportive care (e.g. supportive therapy and monitoring – oxygen therapy, fluid management and antivirals) can be highly effective for those infected.

Prevention

Q: What can I do to prevent the spread of disease?

A: Follow government advisories. (See appendix 1)

Q: How can I help protect myself?

Protection measures for everyone

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. Many countries around the world have seen cases of COVID-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some other countries have succeeded in

slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable so check regularly for the latest news.

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water and clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub.
Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain at least 1 – 2 metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.
Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading

- Follow the guidance outlined above (Protection measures for everyone)
- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone

bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.

Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.

- If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers.

Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

Q: Does current evidence recommend the use of facemask in Fiji to prevent COVID-19?

No. Currently the use of face masks is not recommended for healthy persons. WHO recommends that members of the public only use face masks if they are caring for sick individuals who have COVID-19, or if they have flu-like symptoms.

Limiting the unnecessary use of face masks is important as currently there is a global shortage of face masks, which are critical for use by health care workers.

Q. Is there a vaccine against COVID-19?

No. There are currently no vaccines against coronaviruses, including COVID-19. That is why it is very important to prevent infection or contain further spread after an infection with the COVID-19.

Q. Am I protected against COVID-19 if I had the influenza vaccine this year?

Influenza and COVID-19 are two different viruses and the seasonal influenza vaccine would not protect against infection caused by COVID-19.

Q: Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID-19?

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

Public Health Response and Current Situation

Q: What is the status of COVID-19 cases and spread in Fiji?

As of 29 March, we have 5 confirmed cases and both are isolated in Lautoka and Nadi and Navua hospitals.

Q: What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

Answer:

- **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 see if they become sick.

Q: Who should be Quarantined?

A: Individuals that have been in high-risk areas for the past 14 days or have been in contact with a COVID-19 infected individual need to be quarantined.

Q: Where should a person be quarantined and what should they do/not do

A: A person under quarantine should stay in their home and have contact with as few people as possible. Quarantined individuals must not leave their home unless necessary. Quarantined individuals must not use public transport or taxis. Quarantined individuals must not attend school or work with other people. Quarantined individuals must not visit fitness centres, swimming pools, theaters, cinemas, shopping malls, or other places where people come together. Quarantined individuals can go for a walk but need to keep at least 1 - 2 meter distance from other pedestrians.

Q: What is the purpose of an isolation centre?

An isolation centre is used to separate sick individuals from other, uninfected people. At the isolation centre, generally a dedicated ward at a hospital, the patient will be isolated from other patients, and will be provided appropriate medical care. Health care workers will be provided appropriate protective equipment to help protect them from the virus, whilst providing care to the patient.

Q: What is the purpose of a Community Isolation facility?

Confirmed cases who at determined low risk and display mild symptoms, may be transferred to a community isolation facility. Community Isolation facility will

free up hospital that may be dealing with more serious cases. It is a precautionary measure that helps reduce the risk of a contagious disease spreading. Patients will be restricted to the Isolation facility until they are fully recovered from the virus, then they will be cleared and allowed to re-enter the community.

Q: What is a fever clinic and where are they located?

Refer to Appendix 2

Q: Has anyone in Fiji gotten infected with the COVID-19?

Yes. Currently we have 2 imported cases and 3 locally transmitted cases in Fiji.

Q: Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

Travel

Q: What should I do if I become unwell with symptoms when returning to Fiji from travel in areas known to have confirmed cases of COVID-19?

If travellers returning to Fiji become unwell, they should immediately inform the Ministry of Health and Medical Services through public health officers monitoring the reporting hotlines. The public health officer will be able to inform you of next steps and what to do. It is important that you notify health facilities ahead of time of your arrival, as this will help them limit the spread of the virus.

Reporting Hotlines to contact:

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Q: Is it safe to travel to China or other countries where COVID-19 cases have occurred?

Members of the public, especially individuals whom are planning to travel abroad, are recommended to check the Fijian MoHMS website and Facebook page for the latest updates on the situation in Fiji and globally, and also check the health authority websites of countries you are planning travel to.

Q: What if I recently travelled to China and got sick?

A: If you were in China or any another country affected by COVID-19, and within 14 days of your return to Fiji, feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should:

- Seek medical advice – Go to a nearest fever clinic near you. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services will continue to monitor the developing situation and adapt our advice accordingly.

Q: Need more information on curfews

See Appendix 3

Q: Need more information on inter-island vessel travel

See Appendix 4

Q: Need dates for schools/university closure

See Appendix 5

Q: Need more information on Suva lockdown

See Appendix 6

Appendix 1 Information on restrictions/government advisories

- Cruise ships are banned. Anyone entering Fiji must immediately shut themselves in self-quarantine for 14 days. Everyone who gets off our flights is being quarantined in government-funded, designated centres, under close supervision by medical teams and personnel of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces. They will not interact with anyone from the public for at least 14 days.
- Social gatherings are banned in Fiji.
- 20 person limit now applies only to the workplace
- From 26th March, Nadi Airport is officially shut down to all scheduled passenger travel
- From 29th March, all passenger travel to our outer islands have ceased. Shipping lines for freight will continue — with increased bulk but decreased frequency — to ensure food and other essential goods are supplied across our islands.
- All Fijians, everywhere in Fiji, should avoid all non-essential travel. That means no Fijian should travel from their home unless absolutely necessary. And they certainly should not be travelling around the country, across divisions or to different islands.
- New nationwide curfew from 8pm to 5am, every night, everywhere in Fiji from 3rd April. (Further information on curfew – see Appendix 3)
- In the interest of convenience and due to travel restrictions, every existing work permit in Fiji will be automatically extended for the next three months (from 29th March) – for more details transfer call to Immigration.
- From 6pm 30th March, inter-island flights will cease, except for freight purposes.
- Our outreach teams are across the country raising community awareness of how to combat coronavirus.
- Those Fijians under compulsory self-quarantine are receiving check-in calls and in-person visits by members of our disciplined forces and health workers.

Appendix 2

Information on Fever Clinics

- People are encouraged to visit the fever clinics should they have a fever or develop any symptoms of COVID-19
- As of Friday, 1 April there are **37 fever clinics** in operation around the country.
- Most of the Clinics are open from 8am-4pm : Monday – Sunday

Except:

- Punjas Health Centre (Lautoka) and Kamikamica Health Centre (Lautoka) - open from 8am-10pm
- Valelevu Health Centre (in Nasinu) - open 24 hours (NOTE: The health centre is open 24/7; NOT the fever clinic)

The fever Clinics around the country are listed below:

Eastern Division

1. Levuka (Eli Peceli Hall)
2. Lomaloma Health Centre
3. Lakeba (Old Nurses Quarters)
4. Vunisea (Outpatient Foyer)
5. Rotuma Hospital
6. Cicia District School

Western Division

1. Punjas Health Centre
2. Kamikamica Health Centre
3. Viseisei Health Centre
4. St. Thomas High School
5. Tavua Hospital (in front of maternity)
6. Ba Health Center
7. Balevuto Health Centre
8. Nailaga Health Centre
9. Ba Mission Hospital (Tent Outside)
10. Rakiraki Hospital (Car Park)
11. Nadi Hospital
12. Bukuya Health Centre
13. Namaka Health Centre
14. Sigatoka Hospital
15. Cuvu Health Centre

Northern Division

1. Nasea Health Centre
2. Nutrition Training Centre
3. Savusavu (Old Public Health Building)
4. Waimaqera Health Centre (Outside)
5. Waiyevo Health Centre (Outside)
6. Nabouwalu Hospital

Central Division

1. Lami (Tikaram Park)
2. Raiwaqa (Pentecostal Church)
3. Valelevu (Tennis Court)
4. Nakasi Health Centre (Car Park)
5. Nausori Old Market
6. Wainibokasi Health Centre (Car Park)
7. Navua Hospital (Tent Outside)
8. Vunidawa Hospital (Tent outside)
9. Nakorosule Health Centre (Tent outside)
10. Korovou (Behind the bus stop at the junction to Hospital)

Appendix 3

Information on Nationwide curfew

- A new, nationwide curfew that is in force from 10pm at night until 5am in the morning, every night, everywhere in Fiji.
- The Fiji Police Force over 100 permanent checkpoints set up all throughout the country, to be supplemented with more, temporary checkpoints as the need arises.
- If you're seeking medical care, or who have some other emergency to tend to you are also permitted to travel.

Specific information:

All businesses will need to ensure all staff who are required to work during curfew hours carry the following:

- Company Photo ID cards, in the absence of company ID, the staff will need to carry a valid National photo ID, such as Voter ID, Joint ID or Driver's License;
- Letter on company letterhead issued to staff that they are required to work during that specific time; and
- National Contact Centre telephone contact (where applicable) to verify the claims of the staff. Where there is no contact centre, a contact officer should be identified and contact details provided.

The contracted service provider, that is, taxi or bus operator, or port service providers, such as tug operators or line port service providers, to name a few, should be provided with the following:

- A letter from the contracting company on company letterhead that they are service providers for the company and are required to work during the curfew period; and
- National Contact Centre telephone contact (where applicable) to verify the claims. Where there is no contact centre, a contact officer should be identified and contact details provided.

Appendix 4

Information on Inter-Island Vessel travel

SMALL CRAFTS AND YACHTS

For small crafts that intend to travel carrying important provisions between Viti Levu and closer islands are to call Maritime Surveillance Centre (MSC) on 3315380 and tell the centre on their travel intentions. The following information must be conveyed:

- i. Name of Boat Captain;
- ii. Name and Number of Crew (Max of 3);
- iii. Cargo;
- iv. Departure and Destination Point;
- v. MSAF Issued Boat Number; and
- vi. Phone Contact.

For further clarifications and queries, please contact Fiji Navy on 9904618 or 7356367.

ALL FISHING RELATED ACTIVITIES

Please note that fishing for subsistence and commercial purposes will be allowed during the curfew hours, as long as **fishermen leave their home ports well-before curfew hours**.

For any fishing related activities and clarifications, please contact Ministry of Fisheries on 9966745

RO-RO AND CONVENTIONAL VESSELS

For enquiries about any services provided by Ro-Ro & Conventional Vessels servicing the economical and uneconomical routes, please contact the Director of Transport – Ms. Faranise Kinivuwai on 9983245

Following are steps that must be taken by all shipping and truck companies:

- Vessel operators are to allow trucks and drivers to embark.
- Vessel operators are to keep a register of details for all drivers who board the vessels.
- All drivers are to wear Personal Protective Equipment at all times.
- Shipping operators are to discourage crew members from unnecessarily disembarking at ports and jetties and socialising at these points.
- For inter-island shipping, shipping operators and crew are to offload cargo and freight at a designated location on the jetty or port.
- Drivers can now move with their vehicles and deliver in outlying island.
- Truckers and vessel operators are to ensure that proper screening takes place by filling in the necessary form.
- Members of the public collecting freight are to collect from this point, practising social distancing. They are not to board the vessel under any circumstances.
- All turaga ni koros to liaise with Itaukei Affairs for further information.

Appendix 5**Information on Closure of Schools/Universities**

Institution	Closed until
All primary/secondary schools	17 th April 2020
Fiji National University	13 th April 2020
The University of the South Pacific	13 th April 2020
The University of Fiji	?
APTC	Closed until further notice

Suva area starting from the Delainavesi Bridge on the Queen's Road, the Sawani Junction, and the Nausori Bridge will be on lockdown for a period of 14 days starting from 5am, 3 April 2020.

Within the greater Suva confined area:

- The greater public will not be allowed in or out, only those travelling for medical purposes will be allowed through checkpoints.
- All non-essential businesses will be closed.
- Supermarkets and shops selling food will remain open.
- Restaurants can remain open, so long as they cut seating capacity below 20 people, practice safe physical distancing between tables and at queues, and must focus on takeaway and delivery orders.
- Banks will remain open so that people can get money.
- Pharmacies will remain open so that people can get medicine.
- FNPF will remain open so that people can access funds.
- Markets will remain open.
- Given some Fijians need to seek specialised treatment at facilities in Suva, the checkpoints will allow these individuals who need to undergo surgery or receive kidney dialysis treatment.

