



UNIVERSITY OF  
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# INFORMATION ON COVID-19

**THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) OUTBREAK CONTINUES TO SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD, WITH CASES NOW IN AROUND 65 COUNTRIES. THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF IS OUR ABSOLUTE PRIORITY AND WE ARE TAKING ACTIVE MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IN THE UNIVERSITY FEELS INFORMED AND SUPPORTED. THIS IS A GLOBAL ISSUE THAT CHANGES ON A DAILY BASIS AND SO WE WILL SEND REGULAR UPDATES TO KEEP EVERYONE INFORMED.**

## WHAT IS A CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The newly discovered coronavirus named severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) causes COVID-19.

## WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) is the infectious disease caused by the recently discovered coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). It is characterized mainly by fever, cough and breathlessness. The disease ranges in severity from mild illness to severe pneumonia.

## WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING COVID-19?

As of 2 March, 65 countries around the world had reported a total of 88 948 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and there have been over 3000 deaths. The vast majority of the cases (80 174) and deaths (2915) have been in China. There have now been five confirmed cases in African countries (two cases in

Egypt and one case in each of Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco and Senegal). No cases have yet been reported in South Africa, although two South Africans are currently being treated for the disease in Japan.

## HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or just breathes out. Other people catch COVID-19 if they are close to that person and breathe in those droplets. In addition, these droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

## WHO IS AT RISK FOR COVID-19?

At the moment, people who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or who have been travelling in parts of the world where the virus is actively spreading are most at risk of COVID-19. The areas where the virus is currently thought to be actively spreading in the community are Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, Italy and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK OF CATCHING COVID-19?

You can take care of your own health and protect others by doing the following, which are also relevant for other respiratory virus infections such as the common cold and influenza:

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or with an alcohol-based hand rub. This kills viruses that may be on your hands.

The person who is coughing or sneezing must maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance from other people. This means they are at less risk of breathing in the small droplets that contain virus.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. 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 people around you, practice 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. By doing this, everyone is protected from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

**IF YOU FEEL UNWELL,  
STAY AT HOME AND DON'T ATTEND  
WORK OR CLASSES**

## WHO IS AT RISK OF DEVELOPING SEVERE ILLNESS WITH COVID-19?

At present, it seems that older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as chronic lung disease or heart disease are at higher risk of severe illness and death. One thing we don't yet know is whether HIV-positive people are more or less likely to develop severe illness if they catch COVID-19.

## WHAT IS UKZN DOING TO PREPARE FOR COVID-19?

The university has formed a Response Team made up of specialists in public health medicine, infectious disease, and virology. The Response Team is working with the campus health services and occupational health teams to prepare and plan for a situation where COVID-19 reaches UKZN. In the next few days and weeks, we will be stepping up information and awareness

sessions for students and staff. We will also be training staff in the measures to be taken when there is a suspected case of COVID-19 on campus, and will be working closely with the local health teams to ensure that we deal effectively with the situation should it arise.

## WHAT TRAVEL PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN BY STAFF AND STUDENTS?

If you intend to travel out of South Africa for UKZN related work, it is essential that you check the NICD website for the updated list of countries affected by the COVID-19 outbreak before booking any flights and discuss with your line manager or supervisor. An additional risk assessment will need to be made.

## WHAT IF I HAVE RECENTLY RETURNED TO SOUTH AFRICA FROM AN AFFECTED COUNTRY OR REGION?

If you have recently returned from an area where there is thought to be active spread of the disease in the community (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, Italy and the Islamic Republic of Iran) you should immediately stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu. You should notify your line manager or supervisor of your recent travel to the area. You should follow this advice even if you do not feel unwell in any way.

## WHERE ELSE CAN I GET INFORMATION AND ADVICE ABOUT COVID-19?

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) is maintaining an excellent website about COVID-19 (<http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/>) which has lots of information for health care workers and for the public. Members of the public can also contact the NICD on a toll free hotline 0800 029 999 (Mon-Fri 8am-4pm) should they be concerned about COVID-19. Further information about the COVID-19 outbreak can also be found on the World Health Organization website (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>).

### USEFUL VIDEOS

**Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)**  
<https://youtu.be/mOV1aBVYKGA>

**How to protect yourself against COVID -19**  
<https://youtu.be/1APwq1df6Mw>

**Q&A How to protect yourself when traveling during the coronavirus outbreak**  
<https://youtu.be/OKBvReECRrl>