

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

TIPS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Risk communication and community engagement for coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

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Introduction

Rumours and misinformation can travel fast

There is an overabundance of information circulating about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which can make it hard for people to identify which information is reliable and trustworthy. Rumours and misinformation travel fast – especially through social media. This can not only stop people from adopting preventive measures that keep them safe but even more worrying, adopting ineffective prevention measures, increasing their risk of infection.

We have a responsibility to help people understand

National Societies can help people to understand the facts and adopt safe, healthy practices by using their social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.) to share accurate information about COVID-19 and address questions and rumours. Social media can also be used to collect feedback from the population about their perceptions of the virus.

This document provides a set of quick recommendations to listen, track and respond to your audiences and providing timely, accurate information about COVID-19 using social media. We have also included social media content and templates so you can edit this content into local languages.

How can I use social media as part of the COVID-19 response?

1. **Share:** Key health messages with your audience to help them adopt healthy, safe and preventative practices.
2. **Update:** Information about how the National Society is responding to COVID-19.
3. **Respond:** Understand and correct rumours and misinformation that appear on your social media pages, or that are widely circulating in the country. This will help reduce panic and fear and ensure people follow accurate guidance.
4. **Listen:** Run surveys or polls to ask your audience to respond to key questions about COVID-19 in order to better understand people's knowledge and perceptions.

1. Share

a) Share key health messages

- **Post useful, practical information** about how to stay healthy and reduce the spread of infection. Avoid using scientific terms on social media, such as 'COVID-19' or 'containment'. Instead, write in the normal, everyday language people are using in your country, such as 'corona virus', or 'what to do if I feel sick?'
- **Do your research on hashtags.**¹ Use hashtags already utilized by IFRC, WHO and others, including: #Coronavirus and #COVID19. In addition, tap into any local hashtags where conversations are happening (example: [#CoronaVirusSA](#)).
- **Use existing IFRC content.** IFRC has produced a range of social media content that can be shared daily or every few days. All content can be found at the end of this document. They are available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic but are editable into local language. This is using an online website called Canva, that lets you edit graphics. To find out more about how to use Canva read the [quick start guide](#).

b) Repost content from other reliable sources:

- Follow, share and re-tweet IFRC:
 - [Twitter \(IFRC / IFRC Africa\)](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
- Follow, share and retweet WHO:
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)

2. UPDATE

a) Provide updates on how your National Society is responding

- Provide updates on what your National Society is doing to respond to COVID-19 and tag relevant partners, donors and key stakeholders you are working with.

¹ A **hashtag**, introduced by the number sign, or hash symbol, #, is a type of [metadata tag](#) used on [social networks](#) such as [Twitter](#) and other [microblogging](#) services. It lets users apply [dynamic](#), [user-generated](#) tagging that helps other users easily find messages with a specific theme or content. Users create and use hashtags by placing a hash symbol in front of a word or unspaced phrase in a message. (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashtag>)

3. RESPOND

a) Use social media to understand and correct rumours and misinformation

Monitor social media

- ✓ **Develop a routine:** Monitoring and engaging on social media should become a daily habit if you want to understand what is being said about COVID-19 and maintain a relationship with your audience. Set aside 30 minutes every day to respond to your social media followers, provide updated information and collect feedback.
- Within the Movement, [Hootsuite](#) (free, basic account), [Brandwatch](#) (not free) and [Social Studio](#) (not free) are widely used tools for Social Media Listening.

Respond to people's posts on social media

- **Show that you are listening:** Acknowledge and respond to messages on your social media pages within 3-6 hours to show a human face to your response.
- **Correct rumours and misinformation quickly:** If inaccurate information is posted on your social media pages, respond with the correct, factual information.
- **Engage in conversations:** Select key questions or concerns raised on social media and provide information to respond to these or set up a live question and answer session with an expert to explore this topic in more detail. This will build, sustain and improve your trust and credibility.
- **Avoid arguments:** Don't get into a public argument with someone on social media. Ask the person to send you a direct message or email and respond to their questions in private.

4. LISTEN

a) Conduct social media surveys and polls

You can also use social media to carry out surveys with the public to find out their knowledge, perceptions, fears, questions, suggestions and the rumours circulating about COVID-19. Responses should be monitored and added to the feedback log sheet and a report summarising findings shared with colleagues. Once the survey is over, make sure you provide the correct answers to the question being asked.

Questions you could ask through a social media poll include;

- What have you heard about the new coronavirus?
- How do you think you catch the new coronavirus?
- What are the symptoms of the new coronavirus?
- What will happen to someone who gets infected with the new coronavirus?
- How can you protect yourself against the new coronavirus?
- What are the main questions you have about the new coronavirus?
- What are your biggest concerns about the new coronavirus?
- What do you think needs to happen to stop the new coronavirus spreading?
- What are people saying about the new coronavirus in your community?

b) How to run a social media poll

Facebook

- You can ask questions through the [Facebook poll function](#) or you can ask people questions through a normal post and then ask them to vote by reacting to your post with an emoticon of your choice (for example, a smiley to say “yes” and a sad face to say “no”).
- You can decide to create a poll or a post and [pay to promote it](#) (this is where you pay a small fee and Facebook will share your post with target groups or geographical areas). This can be particularly helpful if you want information from specific groups, age ranges, professions or if you want feedback from a specific geographical area.
- After posting key health information, ask a question, for example: was this message clear? Do you have doubts about #coronavirus? Send us your questions here...

Twitter

- [Twitter Polls](#) allow you to weigh in on questions posed by other people on Twitter. You can also easily create your own poll and see the results instantly.
- Your poll’s duration defaults to one day. You can change the duration of your poll by clicking one day and adjusting the days, hours and minutes. The minimum amount of time for a poll is five minutes and the maximum is seven days.

Instagram

- Instagram can be a great way to engage your audience. Especially popular among younger audiences globally (16-25 years).
- Through its [story function](#), it is very easy to ask questions or poll your audience through the [poll function](#). This can be a fun and engaging way to ask people what they think.

WhatsApp / WhatsApp for business

- [WhatsApp for business](#) is a free tool created by WhatsApp to establish two-way channels with your target audience. This tool is already used in many countries by companies and organizations as a customer service tool to provide information and respond to questions. Users can be organized in distribution lists (mass SMS-like function) and groups. This means that you can easily target your message to sub-groups within your audience or you can send messages to all your contacts.
- Groups could be set up with staff, volunteers, community representatives or community groups provided you have their WhatsApp telephone number.
- One of the many functions of WhatsApp for business is that you can conduct polls. This will be in the form of a message that people receive asking them to vote on different options.
- Use existing WhatsApp groups with staff and volunteers to ask to report rumours, questions, misperceptions or suggestions they hear about the new coronavirus from community members, family and friends. If a question, suggestion or rumour appears

multiple times, it should be incorporated into information being shared with communities. Always answer questions and address rumours in the group.

GENERAL TIPS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- ✓ **Think twice:** don't post anything that you would not be happy to see or hear quoted in a newspaper, a work meeting, or at the family dinner table. Check your post for potentially inappropriate, unverified, stigmatizing or political content. If in doubt, do not post.
- ✓ **Avoid speculation that can stoke rumours.** Take a cautious approach to internal and external messaging. Before posting anything, ask yourself whether or not it useful for your intended audience.
- ✓ **Obtain people's consent** if sharing photos or videos of them, including parental consent before sharing images of children. Don't share people's personal details, such as names and location, particularly in sensitive contexts.
- ✓ **All images of people** should represent them as dignified, empowered and equal partners.
- ✓ **Mistakes happen.** When they do, acknowledge that something has gone wrong and say what you are doing to fix the situation.
- ✓ **Work with your communication, health and community engagement focal points** both in IFRC as well as in your National Society to ensure you are in line with latest and accurate messages.

For more information contact:

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Social media content and templates from IFRC

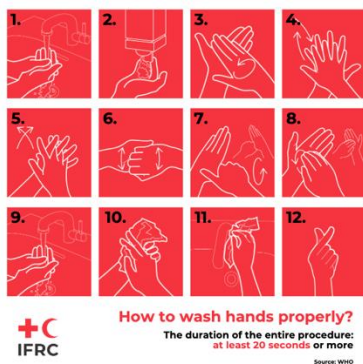
Download the full package:

- [English](#)
- [French](#) (not all available – coming soon)
- [Portuguese](#) (coming soon)
- [Swahili](#)
- [Arabic](#)

Infographic:

- Learn. Act. Help ([Use template/download](#))
- Dealing with stress ([download](#))

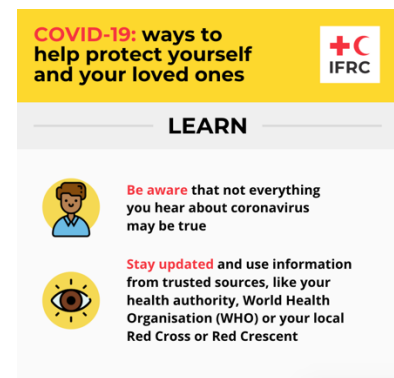
Edit and adapt content for your own use:



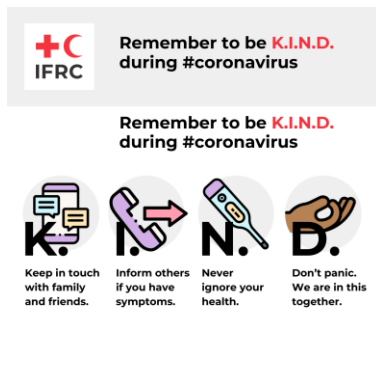
[Use template/download](#)
(1 card)



[Use template/download](#)
(6 cards)



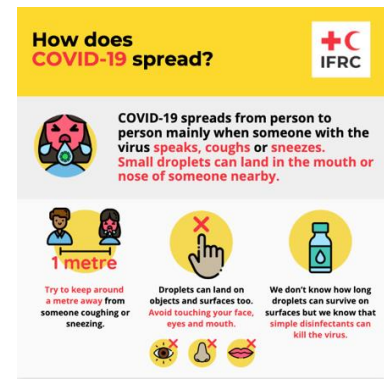
[Use template/download](#)
(3 cards)



[Use template/download](#)
(1 card)



[Use template/download](#)
(3 cards)



[Use template/download](#)
(1 card)

Should you wear a mask?



-  **Yes.** If you have respiratory symptoms - cough, difficulty breathing
-  **Yes.** If you are providing care to individuals with respiratory symptoms
-  **Yes.** If you are a health worker and attending to individuals with respiratory symptoms
-  **Not needed** for general public who do not have respiratory symptoms

Source: WHO

[Use template/download](#)
(1 card)

Stay healthy while travelling







-  **Avoid travel** if you have a fever and cough
-  If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing **seek medical care early**
-  Share previous travel history with your health provider

Source: WHO

[Use template/download](#)
(4 cards)

Reduce risk of coronavirus infection



-  Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
-  When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue - throw tissue away immediately and wash hands
-  Avoid close contact with anyone that has fever and cough

Source: WHO
3 February 2020

[Use template/download](#)
(4 cards)

Protect others from getting sick





-  Cover mouth and nose with tissue, sleeve or elbow when coughing or sneezing
-  Throw tissue into closed bin after use
-  Clean hands after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick

Source: WHO

[Use template/download](#)
(4 cards)

Coping with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help.
Contact your friends and family.

Source: WHO

[Download](#)
(6 cards)

[Check here for updated social media cards](#)