



Dr Ben is Head of Health and Care with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). With this weekly fact sheet he will address some of the most common questions and rumours being asked by communities across Africa about the coronavirus, known as COVID-19. These questions and rumours are collected from communities by Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies working across Africa. This fact sheet aims to help National Societies respond to common questions and provide the facts behind the rumours and misinformation about the coronavirus.

## 1. Are people making money with the disease?

- The coronavirus outbreak is a human tragedy that is also having a very negative impact on the global economy.
- The pandemic is heavily affecting people's ability to work and make an income, businesses are closed, there is limited travel and it's harder to transport goods and services from country to country.
- A huge amount of funding is needed by Governments and aid agencies to meet the humanitarian needs around the world caused by coronavirus, for example to provide health care, make sure people know how to protect themselves and help people who have lost their incomes.
- Donors such as the UN, the EU, and private companies have committed funding to support health care and provide support to people in need.
- This funding is not given to individuals but is given to organizations so they can provide services and support to communities to help fight the pandemic.
- However, none of this begins to meet the scale of needs caused as a result of the coronavirus.
- When humanitarian organisations receive funds from donors they have to follow strict reporting requirements explaining what the money was spent on and why.
- Businesses that make health care supplies like face masks or soap are seeing an increase in demand for their products.

## 2. How often should we wash or sanitize our hands?

- We should all wash our hands with soap and water regularly, as this is the best and most effective way to clean our hands. You do not need to use a special type of soap – any liquid or hard soap will do.
- We **always** have to wash or sanitize our hands:
  - after blowing our nose, coughing or sneezing
  - before, during and after caring for a sick person
  - after visiting a public space, including public transport, markets and places of worship
  - after touching surfaces outside of the home, including money
  - after using the toilet
  - after handling rubbish
  - before, during, and after preparing food, especially raw food
  - before eating food
  - after touching animals and pets
  - after changing babies' nappies or helping children use the toilet
  - when our hands are visibly dirty

- Wash your hands properly for 20 seconds and cover all parts of the hands - fingers, thumbs, between fingers, under nails, palms and the back of your hands.
- After scrubbing all surfaces of your hands, rinse them thoroughly and dry them with a clean cloth or a single-use towel.
- You can also rub your hands with hand sanitizer for 20 seconds. If you do so, make sure it is at least 60% alcohol as this is what is needed to kill the virus properly. Alcohol like vodka, rum and whiskey are only 40% alcohol so are not strong enough to kill the virus.
- Do not use ash and water, as ash cannot destroy the coronavirus.
- Follow the following five simple rules to keep yourself and your family safe – particularly your older relatives or those with existing illnesses.

## THE 5 SIMPLE RULES TO KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE

1. Always wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Proper hand washing should take around 20 seconds and cover all parts of your hands – fingers, thumbs, between fingers, under nails, palms and the back of your hands. Sing the happy birthday song twice while you wash your hands to time 20 seconds. This will kill any viruses that are on your hands and stop them getting into your body.
2. Don't touch your eyes, nose and mouth – this increases the chance of passing the virus from your hands into your body.
3. The virus spreads from person to person so try to limit your contact with other people. Stay home and avoid bars, restaurants and public events. If you do go out, try to keep a safe distance from others. Imagine you are holding a big broom - you are a safe distance if you can't touch anyone with it. Avoid shaking hands, holding hands, kisses on the cheeks or hugs.
4. If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow – and wash your hands if you do cough or sneeze into your hands.
5. Stay at home if you feel unwell and have a dry cough and fever, or shortness of breath and contact your local health services or Ministry of Health hotline. This reduces the chance you might spread the virus to others.

## 3. Where does the name COVID-19 come from?

- The official name of the coronavirus disease is 'COVID-19'.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced "COVID-19" as the name of this new disease on 11 February 2020.
- Human disease preparedness and response is WHO's role, so diseases are officially named by WHO.
- 'COVID-19' is composed of the first letters of **CO**ronavirus **VI**rus **D**isease and combined with '-19', which stands for the year 2019 - the year the disease started.
- An effort was made to find a name that does not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also easy to pronounce and related to the disease.
- A reference to a geographic location or a group of people has to be avoided, as this could lead to stigmatization of people from a specific country or region.
- COVID-19 is part of the coronavirus family, which is a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds, and respiratory infections in humans like colds and flu.
- The name "coronavirus" is derived from the Latin word corona, meaning "crown". The name refers to the appearance of the virus which has spikes on it that look like a crown.
- Some tech companies are also seeing a boost in revenue, as millions of people under lockdown are now turning to digital means to continue with their daily life. This can be applications to order food or groceries, online classes or messaging and streaming platforms.

## 4. Is it only urban areas that are affected?

- EVERYONE can catch coronavirus, no matter where you come from, where you live or if you have travelled recently or not.
- It is true that the first cases of COVID-19 were people who caught the virus in other countries and travelled to African countries and mainly stayed in cities.
- Now there are COVID-19 cases in almost every African country, including lots of people who have never travelled and caught the virus in their own country. We are all at risk of catching it – even if we live in rural areas and have never travelled to other countries.
- The disease spreads when someone who is infected with the virus coughs, sneezes or talks, and the droplets they release from their nose or mouth, get into the eyes, nose or mouth of a healthy person.
- A person who is sick can pass on the disease to other persons and the disease can spread quickly within communities and the whole country.
- People infected with COVID-19 often only have mild symptoms and might not even know they are infected.
- So, no matter who you are, it is important that you follow the five simple rules on page one to keep yourself and your family safe – particularly your older relatives or those with existing illnesses.

**IF THERE ARE QUESTIONS OR RUMOURS SPREADING IN YOUR COUNTRY CONTACT [EVA.ERLACH@IFRC.ORG](mailto:EVA.ERLACH@IFRC.ORG)  
AND WE CAN TRY TO ADDRESS THEM IN THIS FACT SHEET.**