



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 COVID-19 tests free?



- It is difficult to say if the COVID-19 test is free or not because this will be different in every country.
- In many countries, there is a fee to take the COVID-19 test, but some Government-run hospitals might offer free testing or charge a smaller fee. In other countries, the Government offers free tests for people who have symptoms of COVID-19 or to people who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus.
- COVID-19 testing might also be free in situations where the Government is organising mass testing for certain communities or people of a certain age group.
- Before going to take a COVID-19 test, you should call your local MoH hotline to find out the latest information on COVID-19 testing such as the cost of the test, which hospitals or facilities are doing the tests, and how long you will have to wait before receiving the results.
- You might need to organise a test if you are feeling unwell and have COVID-19 symptoms, if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if you need to travel to another country and this is a requirement to enter that country
- To find out more about why we should take a test and how the test is taken see this [video](#).

## 2. How can we find out the number of COVID-19 cases reported in our country?


- An important way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is by staying informed with the latest news on COVID-19 and the pandemic, which also means knowing the number of cases and deaths reported in your country.
- There are different ways that you can find out this information. One of the easiest ways is by going online. If you have access to the internet, the most reliable source is the WHO [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Dashboard](#). There you will be able to find the latest figures on cases and deaths reported in different countries and regions.
- If you don't have access to the internet, your local MoH will have the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak in your country. You can call your local MoH hotline and they will be able to give you the most up to date information on number of cases and information on what the Government is doing to help stop the spread of the virus.

- Remember that staying informed means accessing reliable and trustworthy sources. Here are a few tips on how to identify false information:


### Top tips for navigating the infodemic




**1. Assess the source:**  
Who shared the information with you and where did they get it from? Even if it is friends or family, you still need to vet their source.




**2. Go beyond headlines:**  
Headlines may be intentionally sensational or provocative.




**3. Identify the author:**  
Search the author's name online to see if they are real or credible.




**4. Check the date:**  
Is it up to date and relevant to current events? Has a headline, image or statistic been used out of context?



**5. Examine the supporting evidence:**  
Credible stories back up their claims with facts.



**6. Check your biases:**  
Think about whether your own biases could affect your judgment on what is or is not trustworthy.



**7. Turn to fact-checkers:**  
Consult trusted fact-checking organizations, such as the International Fact-Checking Network and global news outlets focused on debunking misinformation.

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

- 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.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose and mouth – this increases the chance of passing the virus from your hands into your body.
- 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 and wear a face mask. 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, cheek kisses or hugs.
- 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.
- 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. Once COVID-19 is eradicated, can it come back?

- Once a disease has emerged, it is very difficult to fully eradicate it. Most diseases will stay with us for many, many years.
- Many people hoped that COVID-19 would be gone by now, but COVID-19 is still very much with us and affecting millions of lives around the world.
- Even once a safe and effective vaccine has been found, COVID-19 may never completely go away. The number of cases are likely to go down once a vaccine is found, but even if the pandemic slows down, smaller outbreaks of COVID-19 may continue to occur in certain locations or at specific times of the year, like a seasonal flu.
- Many countries adopted public health measures like testing and contact tracing, physical distancing and wearing masks to keep people safe and stop the spread of the virus., which have helped in slowing down infections.
- But it will take a long time before we can stop following prevention measures, most likely we will need to continue practising these public health measures , even once a vaccine is available. This is because the most at-risk people, like healthcare workers, people over 60 years of age or people living with a pre-medical condition, will receive the vaccine first. It may be many months, or even years, before the vaccine is available to the general public. So, in the meantime, we will need to continue following the prevention measures to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe.

## 4. Can COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?

- Recent studies have found that airborne transmission of COVID-19 is possible in certain situations.
- COVID-19 spreads when someone who is infected with the virus coughs, sneezes or talks and the tiny liquid they release from their nose or mouth, also called droplets, get into the eye, nose or mouth of a healthy person. Studies have found that these droplets can stay in the air for 30 minutes or up to 3 hours depending on their size, after someone has coughed or sneezed.
- But the chances of catching COVID-19 through the air depends on many things, for example how close you are to the other person and the level of ventilation in the room.
- Airborne transmission is more likely to happen in poorly ventilated indoor spaces especially if people are in the same room together for a long time, like a workspace.
- Airborne transmission is also more likely to happen in health care settings where some medical treatments can cause these droplets to spread in the air.
- That is why it's important that we take extra care to make sure that we always keep a distance of 2 meters from other people, wear a face mask when physical distancing is not possible and wash your hands regularly.If you need to meet with colleagues or friends meet somewhere outside instead, and keep windows and doors open where possible.