

## Introduction

The Malawi Government through Ministry of Health and Population would like to bring to the attention of the general public that there is a global outbreak of Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID - 19). The disease has its origin in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in the People's Republic of China.

## What is Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID 19)?

COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease this means it can be transmitted from animals to humans. It is caused by a type of newly identified coronavirus called SARS – COV-2. There are several known coronaviruses circulating in animals that are not yet known to infect humans. Coronaviruses can cause common cold and more severe illness in humans include SARS-CoV (causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome - SARS) and MERS-CoV (causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome - MERS).

## How is it transmitted?

- It is transmitted from people who have the virus through:
  - i. Direct contact with droplets through exhaling, coughing or sneezing and body fluids (like blood, sweat, saliva and vomitus) from a person infected with SARS – COV 2.
  - ii. Using clothes, beddings, skin piercing instruments that have been used by an infected person.
  - iii. Eating infected meat and meat products that have not been cooked very thoroughly.
- People can also get infected with COVID-19 from objects and surfaces which have been infected, when people touch these objects and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

## How long does it take for one to become sick?

The incubation period (period from infection to onset of symptoms) is about 14 days. The infected person can transmit the disease to



another person even if they have not started to show symptoms. But the risk of getting infection from someone who is not infected is low.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Coronavirus?

- The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. However, some patients have muscle aches, runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, and or diarrhoea. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment and others become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.
- People with cough, difficulty breathing, and or fever should seek medical attention urgently.

## Is there a severe form of the disease?

- Roughly 1 out of every 6 people infected with SARS - COV 2 becomes seriously ill.
- Severe disease is among older people, and those with underlying medical problems such as chronic respiratory conditions, heart problems or diabetes and other causes of low immunity.

## What shall I do if I am sick with any respiratory illness?

- To keep from spreading respiratory illness to others:
  - i. Stay home when you are sick, and if you experience severe symptoms, consult your medical provider immediately.
  - ii. When coughing or sneezing cover your mouth with a flexed elbow or tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Avoid close contact with others



## How can I help protect myself and my family?

- The virus is not circulating in Malawi right now. However, there are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:
  - i. Avoid close contact with people who are visibly sick with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sneeze).

- ii. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- iii. Wash your hands adequately with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- iv. Avoid unprotected close contact with anyone developing cold or flu-like symptoms;
- Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak.
- You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:
  - i. Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water or if available use an alcohol-based hand rub.
  - ii. Stay at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
  - iii. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
  - iv. Make sure you cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
  - v. Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.
  - vi. Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots and avoid travelling to such places

#### Who is at risk of getting the COVID 19?

- People who have recently travelled to countries affected by COVID 19 in the past 14 days. Anyone who gets in close contact with confirmed COVID 19 cases or their contacts is also at risk of getting infected with SARS COV 2 virus.
- Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

#### Is there a vaccine?

- There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID 19.
- The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

#### Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID 19. People with Coronavirus Disease of 2019 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms and manage complications. The current management protocols include the use of adaptation of Management of Coronaviruses such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV.

#### How can Health Workers protect themselves?

- By implementing standard universal precautions such as handwashing and correct use of the standard personal protective equipment (PPE) e.g. examination gloves, surgical masks and gowns, for all patients at all times.
- When treating suspected or confirmed COVID -19 cases, requires additional PPE for health care workers such as gloves, face shield /goggles, face masks, scrubs and gown.
- A particulate respirator (N95 or higher) should be worn when performing aerosol generating procedures.



Ministry of Health and Population

# KNOW ABOUT CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

