# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pan American Health Organization /
World Health Organization
(PAHO/WHO)

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World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Americas

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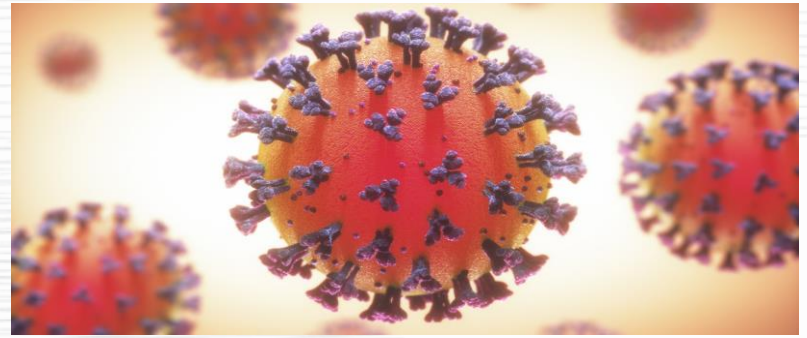
# What is COVID-19?



Coronaviruses

- Large family of viruses
- Can cause illness in animals (common) or humans
- In humans, they cause respiratory infections
- E.gs.: Common cold; Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS); Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); Coronavirus disease COVID-19

COVID-19:

- Infectious respiratory disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus
- This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019
- Animal source under investigation

# Global situation as at 5 March

**Globally:**

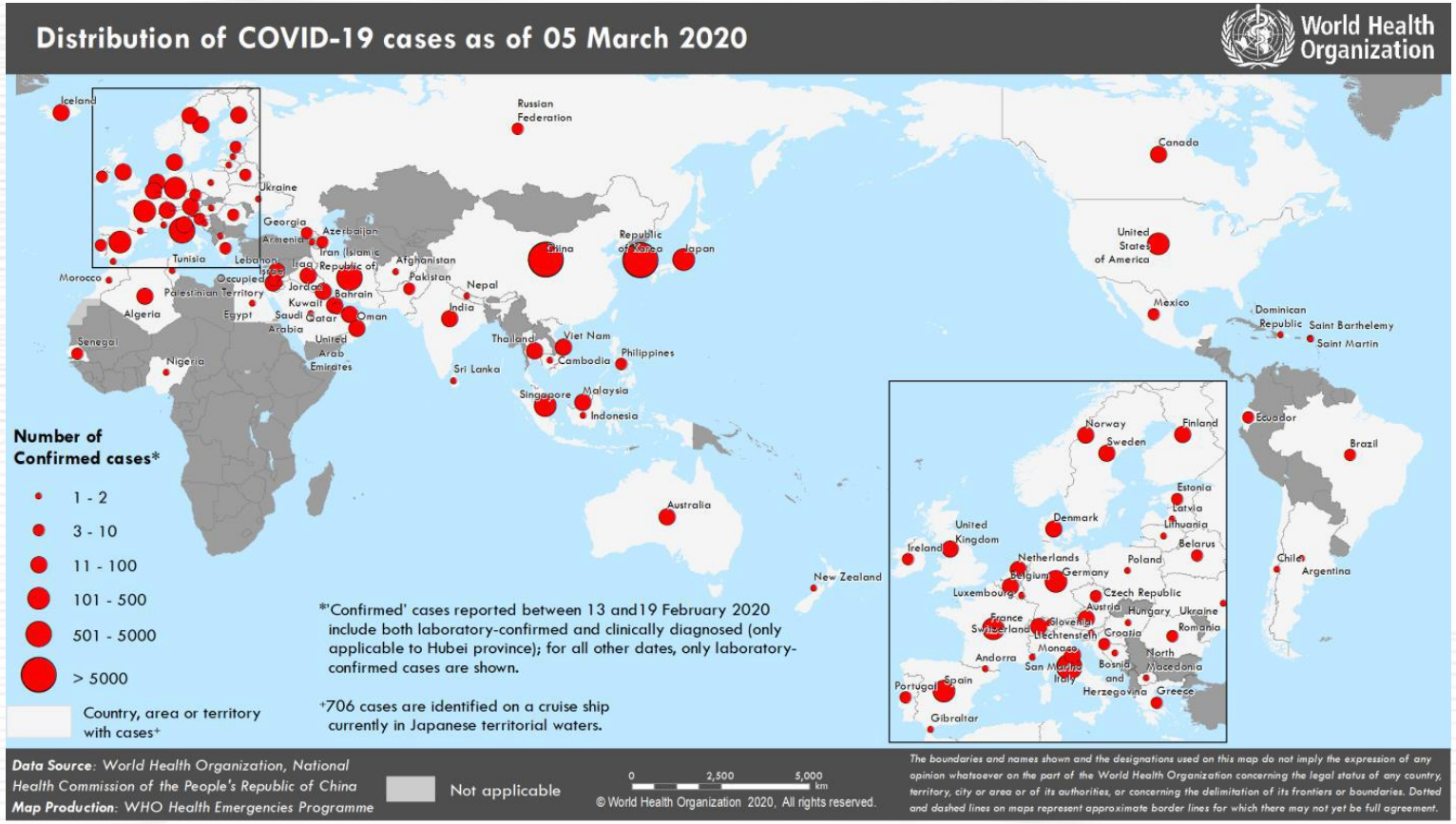
- 95,333 confirmed cases

**China**

- 80,565 confirmed cases
- 3,015 deaths

**Outside of China**

- 14,768 confirmed cases
- 85 countries
- 267 deaths

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# Number of COVID-19 cases in the region of the Americas as of 5 March 2020

PAHO / WHO

## Total of 167 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases reported

| Country | Confirmed | Deaths |
|---|---|---|
| Argentina | 1 | 0 |
| Brazil | 3 | 0 |
| Canada | 33 | 0 |
| Chile | 3 | 0 |
| Dominican Republic | 1 | 0 |
| Ecuador | 13 | 0 |
| French Guiana | 5 | 0 |
| Mexico | 5 | 0 |
| Saint Barthelemy | 1 | 0 |
| Saint Martin | 2 | 0 |
| United States of America | 100 | 11 |

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# WHO Grade 3 Emergency Response

Early January 2020: COVID-19 declared grade 3

GRADE 3 DEFINITION:

- A single or multiple country event with substantial public health consequences that requires a substantial WHO Country Office (WCO) response and/or substantial international WHO response.

# Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

- 30 January 2020 WHO Director General declared COVID-19 a PHEIC

- PHEIC is defined in the IHR (2005) as “an extraordinary event which is determined, as provided in these Regulations:

  - ❑ to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and

  - ❑ to potentially require a coordinated international response”. This definition implies a situation that: is serious, unusual or unexpected; carries implications for public health beyond the affected State’s national border; and may require immediate international action

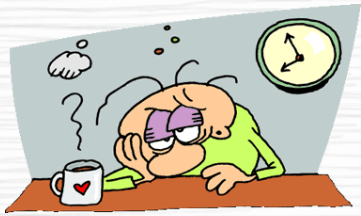
# Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

- Requires convening of a committee of experts (IHR Emergency Committee) to advise the WHO Director General

- PHEIC declared by WHO Director-General

- Temporary recommendations issued include health measures to be implemented by the State Party experiencing the PHEIC, or by other States Parties, to prevent or reduce the international spread of disease and avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic

# COVID-19 symptoms



- Most common: fever, tiredness, and dry cough
- Also aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea
- Symptoms usually mild and begin gradually
- Some infected persons don’t develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell
- Persons usually develop symptoms 1-14 days (mostly around 5 days) after catching the virus

# COVID-19 symptoms (cont'd)

- **Most people, about 80%, recover without needing medical treatment**
- About 14%  become severely ill, some with difficulty breathing
- About 6% require critical care
- About 2% of people with the disease have died
- Those at risk of more severe illness:
  - Older people
  - Those with underlying medical problems (e.g. high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes

**People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention**

# How is COVID-19 spread?

- From person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales
- Droplets can land on nearby objects and surfaces
- People can get COVID-19 by:
  - Breathing in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets (important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick)
  - Touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth
- The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low
- WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share updated findings

# Treatments and vaccines for COVID-19

Antibiotics:

- Antibiotics only work on infections caused by bacteria, NOT those caused by viruses
- COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics cannot work on COVID-19
- If hospitalized for COVID-19, a person may receive antibiotics for co-infection with a bacteria

Vaccine:

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19
- Flu vaccine does not protect against COVID-19

# Treatments and vaccines for COVID-19

- Currently there is no vaccine and no antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019
- Persons are treated to relieve symptoms
- People with serious illness should be hospitalized and most recover with supportive care
- Possible vaccines and treatments are currently under investigation

# How to protect against COVID-19

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are:

- Frequently clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching mouth, nose and eyes
- If ill, cover your cough or sneeze with the bend of elbow or tissue and throw the tissue away
- Stay home if unwell
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention as soon as possible
- Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19

# Use of masks

- Well people do not need to wear a mask
- Masks are useful for:
  - People who have symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing or sneezing)
  - Those caring for ill persons, e.g. health workers and other people taking care of ill persons or suspected COVID-19 cases
- Irrational use of masks will result in wastage and risk of unavailability for those who need them  and increased risk of spread

# Myth busters

Thermal scanners are effective in detecting people who have developed a fever (i.e. have a higher than normal body temperature) because of infection with the COVID-19.

However, they cannot detect people who are infected but are not yet sick with fever. This is because it takes between 2 and 10 days before people who are infected become sick and develop a fever.

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## How effective are thermal scanners in detecting people infected with COVID-19?

People receiving packages from China are not at risk of contracting the COVID-19.

From previous analysis, we know coronaviruses do not survive long on objects, such as letters or packages.

Is it safe to receive a letter or a package from China?

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Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties.

However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from COVID-19.

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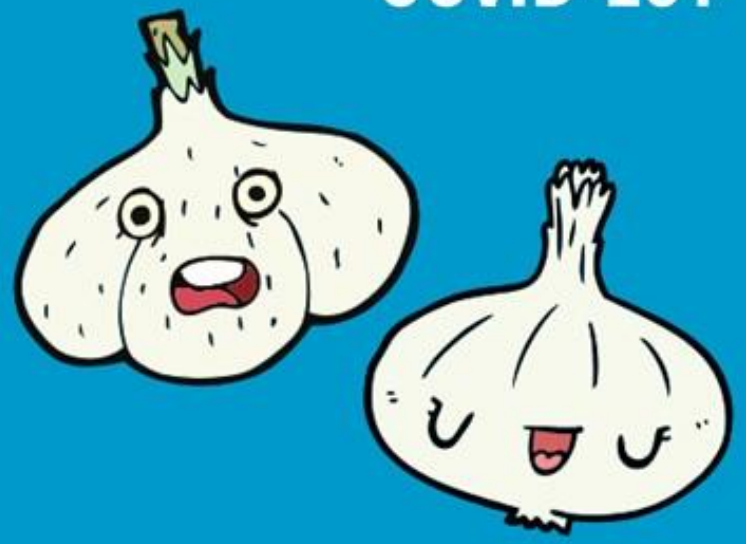
Can eating garlic help prevent infection with COVID-19?



**There is no evidence that using mouthwash will protect you from infection with COVID-19.**

Some brands of mouthwash can eliminate certain microbes for a few minutes in the saliva in your mouth. However, this does not mean they protect you from COVID-19 infection.

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## Can gargling mouthwash protect you from infection with COVID-19?

**There is no evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline has protected people from infection with COVID-19.**

There is some limited evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline can help people recover more quickly from the common cold. However, regularly rinsing the nose has not been shown to prevent respiratory infections.

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## Can regularly rinsing your nose with saline help prevent infection with COVID-19?

**Sesame oil does not kill the virus.**

There are some chemical disinfectants that can kill COVID-19 on surfaces. These include bleach/chlorine-based disinfectants, ether solvents, 75% ethanol, peracetic acid and chloroform.

However, they have little or no impact on the virus if you put them on the skin or under your nose. It can even be dangerous to put these chemicals on your skin.

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## Does putting on sesame oil block COVID-19 from entering the body?

**Breathing in the smoke and gas from a firework or firecracker is dangerous and does not kill the virus.**

The smoke from fireworks and firecrackers contains sulphur dioxide, a mildly toxic gas that some people are allergic to. It can irritate your eyes, nose, throat and lungs and could even cause an asthma attack.

Also, you risk getting burned if you are near enough to a firework to breathe in its smoke.

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## Can the smoke and gas from fireworks and firecrackers prevent COVID-19?

# Can spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body kill the new coronavirus?

No. Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body will not kill viruses that have already entered your body. Spraying such substances can be harmful to clothes or mucous membranes (i.e., eyes, mouth).
Be aware that both alcohol and chlorine can be useful to disinfect surfaces, but they need to be used under appropriate recommendations.

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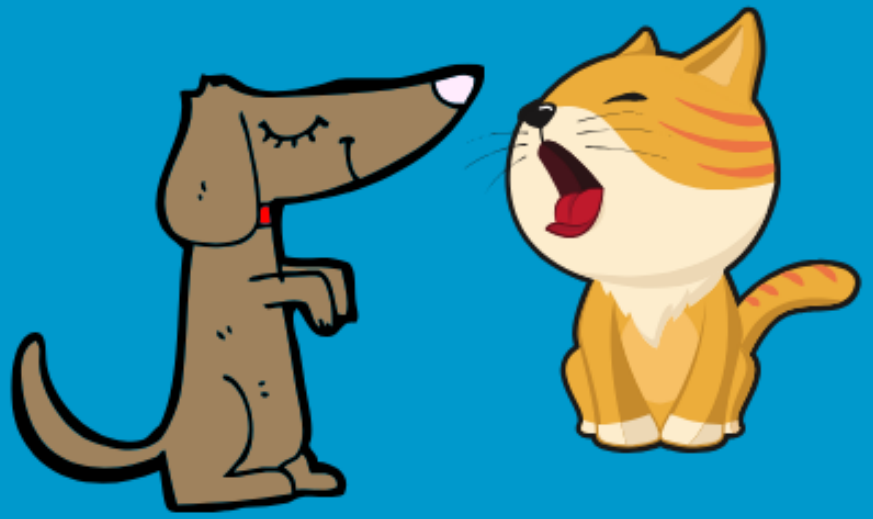
#2019nCoV

# Can pets at home spread the new coronavirus (2019-nC0V)?

At present, there is no evidence that companion animals / pets such as dogs or cats can be infected with the new coronavirus. However, it is always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with pets. This protects you against various common bacteria such as E. coli and Salmonella that can pass between pets and humans.



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# Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating the new coronavirus?

No, antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria.

The new coronavirus (2019-nC0V) is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.

However, if you are hospitalized for the 2019-nCoV, you may receive antibiotics since bacterial co-infection is possible.

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# Some local myth busters

The following may help you to feel better;

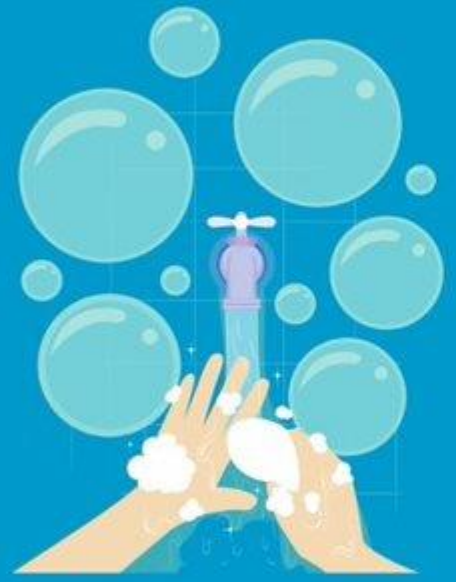
but they **DO NOT PREVENT** you from getting COVID-19 and the **DO NOT CURE** COVID-19:

- Bush bath
- Bush tea
- Vitamin C
- Zinc
- Hot toddy
- Keeping your mouth moist

# How to protect myself

Protect yourself and others from getting sick

# Wash your hands



- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are visibly dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste

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# Protect others from getting sick

Avoid close contact when you are experiencing cough and fever

Avoid spitting in public

If you have fever, cough, and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider.

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# Protect others from getting sick

When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands.

Throw tissue into a closed bin immediately after use

Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick

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# STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

Avoid travel if you have a fever and cough

If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider

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# STAY HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELLING

If you become sick while travelling, inform crew and seek medical care early

If you seek medical attention, share travel history with your health care provider

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# Stay informed

- World Health Organization (WHO):

www.who.int

- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO):

www.paho.org

- Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Health:

www.health.gov.tt

# THANK YOU!