ABOUT THE COVID-19 DISEASE, TRANSMISISON AND PREVENTION

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID19) is a new respiratory illness that can easily be spread from person to person. It is spread through contact with droplets produced by a person who is sneezing or coughing or contaminated surfaces or objects. This can cause severe symptoms like fever, cough, headache, body aches and difficulty in breathing.

COVID-19 is preventable through;

- ✓ Washing your hands with soap and running water or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- ✓ Keeping a social distance of at least 2 metres or 2-3 steps from people with flu-like symptoms.
- ✓ Avoiding shaking hands, hugging or kissing with people with flu-like symptoms.
- ✓ Staying at home and avoiding travel when you have flu-like symptoms.
- ✓ Early detection and treatment can contribute greatly to survival of the patient.
- ✓ COVID 2019 cannot be transmitted through air.

Frequently Asked Questions about Coronavirus disease
What is corona virus?
Corona viruses are a large group of viruses many of which cause no or minor illnesses, like the common cold. Some cause illness in people, and others only infect animals. Usually these infections do not cross over from animals to people.

On rare occasions, coronaviruses that infect animals "change" and develop the ability to infect people. This has occurred with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) where the causative viruses were probably initially infections of bats. The new (novel) corona virus was probably also an infection of bats but is now able to infect people. The new (novel) corona virus is officially called Coronavirus Disease-2019 or COVID-19 (because it was first detected in 2019).

How is COVID-19 spread?
COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, linked to a live animal market. This virus is now able to infect humans and can spread from person to person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and are inhaled into the lungs of a person nearby.

- Possibly through touching an infected person who has touched their own mouth and nose which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales.

People are thought to be most contagious when they have symptoms and are sick. There is also evidence that spread might be possible when people are infected but before they become sick, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How do you test if a person has COVID-19 infection?
Testing is performed on a blood sample in specialized laboratories
A negative test result for a person with these symptoms means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing their current illness. There are no approved simple rapid tests for COVID-19 infection at present.

How dangerous is COVID-19 infection?
Fourteen (14) percent of confirmed cases are severe, with serious pneumonia and shortness of breath. Another 5% of patients develop respiratory failure and critical illness. About 2.3% of confirmed cases have resulted in death.

Therefore, the vast majority of confirmed cases have mild infection, with cold-like symptoms and mild pneumonia. It is not known why some people suffer more from the virus than others, but those who have developed serious illness tend to be those with underlying disease, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, hypertension or cancer.

How can I prevent myself from getting COVID-19 infection?
There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The only way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Everyday preventive actions include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay at home if you are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing, and then properly dispose of the tissue.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Alternatively, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands first with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Reduce handshaking (within cultural acceptability).

Should I wear a facemask to prevent myself from getting COVID-19 infection?
In the initial stages, the advice to the public was to only wear a mask if one has symptoms of COVID-19 infection (coughing or sneezing) or is looking after someone who may have COVID-19, to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. However, with more information being shared on its spread, the Government of Kenya advises everybody to wear a mask in public.

Disposable face masks can only be used once.

Remove the mask from behind (do not touch the front of mask) and discard it immediately in a closed bin. Remember to wash your hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer or soap and water.

What is quarantine for COVID-19?
Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not become sick. This is to prevent the possible spread of the disease.

The duration of quarantine is usually for the *incubation period* of the disease, that is, the time from contact with the infection to developing the sickness. For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days. Someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered at risk for spreading the virus to others.

Does handling money (notes and coins) contribute to the spread of the disease?

Paper bills can contain bacteria and viruses that can lead to the spread of disease. Wash your hands carefully after handling money. Better yet, use the various mobile and online banking solutions available to you.

And just as is the case with other activities, remember to wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer after bank transactions.