

Preparedness for novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

What is novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large and diverse family of viruses which includes the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). In January 2020, officials identified a new coronavirus which originated in China. The disease caused by this new virus has been named COVID-19. There is evidence that COVID-19 can spread from person to person in the community and in health care settings.

How is it spread?

Like the flu, COVID-19 can be transmitted from person to person. When an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, they may generate droplets containing the virus. These droplets are too large to stay in the air for long, so they quickly settle on surrounding surfaces.

Droplet-spread diseases can be spread by:

- coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact
- contact with an object or surface with viral particles on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

That's why it's really important to practise good hygiene, regularly wash and thoroughly dry your hands and practice good cough etiquette.

Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to a range of other illnesses such as influenza and do not necessarily mean that you have COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, coughing and difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing can be a sign of pneumonia and requires immediate medical attention. We don't yet know how long symptoms take to show after a person has been infected, but current WHO assessments suggest that it is 2–10 days.

Treatment

As this is a new virus, there is currently no vaccine available. If someone presents with symptoms, such as a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, please seek medical attention. If they are suspected to have contracted the disease, it is likely they will be asked to put themselves in self-isolation for 14 days, or if they are very unwell, be admitted to hospital. Advice for self-isolation is available at www.health.gov.au

Protecting against COVID-19

Contact restrictions

Anyone who has visited China, Iran, Italy and South Korea recently should not visit an Abbeyfield house and residents and staff should avoid contact with anyone who has visited the affected areas recently or who has had exposure to a confirmed case of novel coronavirus.

Hygiene

Staff, volunteers and residents should always practise good hygiene by:

- covering coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues
- washing hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap and drying them thoroughly before eating or handling food
- after using the toilet
- after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
- after caring for sick people.



Housekeepers should also wear clean clothes in food preparation areas, and remove protective clothing such as aprons when leaving the food preparation area.

People with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice good cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues, and wash hands).

Cleaning

Regular cleaning of communal spaces in the house will minimise the spread of infection. Housekeepers should clean frequently-touched surfaces with detergent and disinfectant. Where possible, use disposable cloths to clean surfaces. Reusable cloths should be cleaned, disinfected and then dried after use.

Any faecal and vomit spillages from a person showing symptoms of the disease should be cleaned up, using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (i.e. gloves).

- Remove spillages with paper towels, and then decontaminate the area with an appropriate agent.
- Discard all waste.
- Remove PPE and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

Food Handling

Transmission through food is unlikely and there is no evidence of this occurring with novel coronavirus to date, however investigations to identify the source of the outbreak, the extent of spread of the infection, and mode(s) of transmission are continuing.

Good hygiene and sanitation are important to avoid cross contamination between raw or undercooked foods and cooked or ready to eat foods in the kitchen. As an added precaution, if you have suspected symptoms of respiratory illness you should avoid preparing food for other people and seek medical attention.

We will continue to monitor developments with the relevant department. If there are any changes to the possibility of foodborne transmission of the virus, we will update you.

Staff illness

Housekeepers who have symptoms of the disease should let the house committee know and seek advice from the Department of Health. Abbeyfield Australia must be advised of any outbreak.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the Australian Government Department of Health homepage at www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

Contact your state or territory public health agency:

- ACT call 02 5124 9213 during business hours or (02) 9962 4155 after hours
- NSW call 1300 066 055
- SA call 1300 232 272
- Tas call 1800 671 738
- Vic call 1300 651 160