

Update on Uganda's preparedness situation following the novel 2019 Coronavirus Disease outbreak in China and other countries around the World.

The Ministry of Health would like to update the general public on the progress of country's preparedness to prevent importation of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) into the country.

Current Global Situation

An outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) was declared by the People's Republic of China on 31st December, 2019. This outbreak has now spread to all continents and over 47 countries are currently affected. Many others are being affected too.

In Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Nigeria have already reported cases. The possibility of spread to other African countries, Uganda inclusive is extremely high. Although Uganda has no cases of COVID-19, it is pertinent that the population remains on high alert and diligently exercises preventive measures to avoid contracting the disease.

Uganda has no confirmed case of COVID-19 as of 28th February 2020. However, to date 695 travelers, Chinese, Ugandans and others travelling back home have been isolated for purposes of follow up. Of these 488 are Chinese nationals, 64 other nationals while 143 are Ugandan citizens. 280 individuals have completed 14 days of self-isolation.

The Ministry of Health continues to undertake the following measures to prevent importation of the virus into the country.

1. The Ministry of Health has enhanced surveillance measures for all travelers from COVID-19 affected countries.
2. Developed information materials for educating the public on the disease.
3. The Uganda Virus Research Institute has the necessary equipment and reagents to test and confirm any suspected COVID-19 sample in country.



So far samples from 10 persons who presented with signs and symptoms similar to that of COVID-19 have been tested. All tested negative.

4. Screening at Entebbe International Airport and other points of entry like Malaba, Busia, Eregu and Cyanika have been strengthened with deployment of additional health workers, equipment and infection prevention materials.
5. Travelers from affected countries are required to undergo 14 days self-isolation and are monitored daily by Ministry of Health surveillance teams. Travelers who develop symptoms during follow-up period are checked, samples taken, tested and advised on appropriate care.
6. Ministry of Health continues to engage media outlets and other communication channels to disseminate public information on COVID.
7. Entebbe and Naguru referral hospitals have been prepared to receive and manage suspected cases. In addition, isolation facilities at all regional referral hospitals are being prepared to receive people who may present with signs and symptoms. 11 Ambulances are on standby to transport suspected cases to the appropriate level of care.

The Ministry of Health has developed dos and don'ts to educate the public on how to avoid contracting the disease.

WHAT MUST BE DONE

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or, use an alcohol-based hand rub. This will remove the virus if it is on your hands.
2. Cover your mouth and nose with tissue or a handkerchief when coughing and sneezing. Throw away the used tissue immediately into a dustbin or burn it and wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. The handkerchief must be washed by yourself daily and ironed with a hot iron. In this way, you protect others from any virus released through coughs and sneezes.
3. Maintain reasonable distance between yourself and someone who is coughing, sneezing (at least 1 meter apart).



4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces which can be contaminated with the virus and you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.
5. If you have fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, seek medical care immediately. If possible, call health workers and alert them about your condition. Always follow the guidance of your health care worker.
6. People with flu-like symptoms should use face masks to cover the nose and mouth and stay home in a well-ventilated room.
7. If you are caring for individuals who have symptoms, such as cough and fever you are encouraged to use a face mask to cover your nose and mouth.
8. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs/handles, car doors, elevator buttons etc. daily with regular household disinfectant or soap.
9. All people coming from countries affected by Coronavirus disease should follow guidance given by health workers at the airport and other border entry points.

WHAT MUST NOT BE DONE

1. Avoid hand-shaking and hugging at all times.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are visibly sick with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sneeze).
3. When sick with flu-like symptoms avoid going to public places, offices and public gatherings. Remain at home in isolation to avoid infecting others.
4. You do not need to wear medical masks if you do not have respiratory symptoms such as cough, sneezing or running nose.
5. Don't take self-medication such as antibiotics.
6. Do not spit in public. Find a secluded place like toilets or pit latrines in which to spit in.
7. Delay travel to countries that currently have many patients with Coronavirus disease. If you MUST travel, please follow the above protective measures.



8. Avoid travel if you have flu-like symptoms.

Safety Measures During Mass Gatherings

Organizers of mass gathering must ensure that hand washing facilities or alcohol based sanitizers and temperature screening materials are available at venue entry points.

The Ministry of Health appeals to the general public to remain calm and vigilant and always verify information from the Ministry of Health to avoid spreading false rumors which may cause unnecessary anxiety.

The public is also advised to report any suspected cases to the nearest health facility or call our toll-free lines on 0800-203-033 and 0800-100-066 or the following officers - Mr. Atek Kagirita 0782 909 153, Dr. Allan Muruta- 0772 460 297.



Hon. Jane Ruth Aceng

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

28th February, 2020