

Recommendations for the CVD community in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak

13 February 2020

On 31 January, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus, now called COVID-19, a global public health emergency. To date, China has reported more than 45,000 cases—including more than 1,300 deaths—, with 440 cases in 24 different countries. While public officials and healthcare professionals strive to treat and mitigate the impact of the virus, global health organizations are using their platforms to convey accurate information about the crisis. The World Heart Federation (WHF), as a knowledge-sharing organization, is committed to facilitating access to the latest evidence of the COVID-19 outbreak and ensuring everyone is aware of the necessary measures to protect themselves and others.

COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China in December 2019. Common symptoms of the infection can include sore throat, cough, and fever. The virus can lead to pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome or breathing difficulties and, in more severe cases, be fatal. Individuals with pre-existing medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, have been reported to be more vulnerable to the worst outcomes of the virus.

To adequately address this crisis, front-line healthcare personnel should stay up to date on the latest information about signs and symptoms, as well as learn the essential precautions to protect themselves and others. WHO has compiled a series of instructions for prevention and control when infection with COVID-19 is suspected. WHF strongly recommends following these guidelines to minimize the exposure to the virus and protect the lives of healthcare workers and patients.

Guidelines for healthcare professionals and managers

- Apply standard precautions at your facility, including use of hand and respiratory hygiene measures and use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Prioritize the care of patients who are symptomatic with severe illness. If they are required to wait, ensure they do so in a separated room.
- Transfer patients with acute myocardial infarction, accompanied by other respiratory symptoms, to the nearest facility and treat in situ.
- In areas affected by the coronavirus outbreak, encourage patients with non-urgent needs to avoid healthcare facilities after the epidemic is controlled.

- Hospitalization may not be required for patients who have mild illness (low-grade fever, cough, sore throat without difficulty in breathing) unless there is concern for rapid deterioration. More information on admission criteria [here](#).
- Place patients suspected with COVID-19 in adequately ventilated single rooms. When single rooms are not available, patients should be grouped together. A minimum of 1-meter distance should be maintained between their beds.
- Designate a team of healthcare workers (HCWs) to care exclusively for these cases to reduce the risk of transmission. Ensure the team assigned is trained in the proper use of PPE. HCWs should use contact precautions while reviewing the patient, including long-sleeved gowns, gloves and eye and facial protection.
- Avoid moving the patients and limit the presence of unnecessary individuals in the room.
- Ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed correctly.

Guidelines for people with hypertension, diabetes and other NCDs

Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease, have been reported to be more vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 due to their weaker immune functions. Therefore, WHF recommends people living with these conditions to:

- Continue taking your medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your flex elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid close contact with anyone experiencing cough and fever.

For additional information, we encourage you to monitor the updates of the [World Health Organization](#). For other enquiries, please contact us at communications@worldheart.org.

The World Heart Federation

***References**

World Health Organization. (2020). Infection prevention and control during health care when novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection is suspected: interim guidance, 25 January 2020. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available from: [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected-20200125](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected-20200125)

World Health Organization. (2020). Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) advice for the public. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>