



## **Covid-19 Questions and Answers for the WAHO staff**

### **1. What is SARS-CoV-2?**

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the name given to the 2019 novel coronavirus.

### **2. What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is the name given to the disease associated with the virus.

### **3. Where can we find the do coronaviruses come from?**

Coronaviruses are viruses that circulate among animals with some of them also known to infect humans.

Bats are considered as natural hosts of these viruses yet several other species of animals are also known to be a source.

For instance, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is transmitted to humans from camels, and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-1 (SARS-CoV-1) is transmitted to humans from civet cats. More information on coronaviruses can be found on the ECDC factsheet.

### **4. Is COVID-19 the same as SARS?**

No. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different. SARS was more deadly but much less infectious than COVID-19.

### **5. Is COVID-19 the same as seasonal influenza?**

No. The virus that causes COVID 19 and the one that causes seasonal influenza are not the same. Despite the relatively low mortality rate for seasonal influenza, many people die from the disease due to the large number of people who contract it each year. The concern about COVID-19 is that, unlike influenza, there is no vaccine and no specific treatment for the disease.

It also appears to be as transmissible as influenza if not more so. As it is a new virus, nobody has prior immunity which in theory means that the entire human population is potentially susceptible to COVID-19 infection.

## **6. Situation update for the ECOWAS**

Please go to WAHO web site <https://www.wahooas.org/web-ooas/>

## **7. How severe is COVID-19 infection?**

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. Preliminary findings indicate that the fatality rate for COVID-19 is 2-3 per hundred people diagnosed.

## **8. Are some people more at risk than others?**

Generally elderly people and those with underlying health conditions (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and cancer) are considered to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms.

## **9. How does COVID -19 spread?**

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

## **10. Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?**

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air.

## **11. Can CoVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?**

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

## **12. Can I catch COVID-19 from the feces of someone with the disease?**

The risk of catching COVID-19 from the feces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in feces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak.

## **13. What are the symptoms of COVID-19 infection?**

The virus can cause mild, flu-like symptoms such as: fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, tiredness.

More serious cases develop severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, sepsis and septic shock that can lead to death.

## **14. Are children also at risk of infection?**

Disease in children appears to be relatively rare and mild. A large study from China suggested that just over 2% of cases were under 18 years of age. Of these, fewer than 3% developed severe or critical disease.

## **15. What about pregnant women?**

The current evidence suggests that severity of illness among pregnant women after COVID-19 infection is similar to that in non-pregnant adult COVID-19 cases.

At present, there is no evidence of transmission of COVID-19 from mother to baby occurring during pregnancy.

## **16. Is there a treatment for the COVID-19 disease?**

There is no validated specific treatment for this disease, so healthcare providers treat the clinical symptoms (e.g. fever, difficulty breathing) of patients.

Supportive care (e.g. fluid management, oxygen therapy etc.) can be highly effective and is absolutely needed for patients with symptoms.

## **17. When should I be tested for COVID-19?**

Current algorithm does not require all possible contacts to be tested, rather they need to be monitored, self-isolated, and tested depending on other factors.

Testing approaches should be adapted to the situation at national and local level. If you have any symptoms of illness please call the alert number in Burkina Faso 3535. A health worker team will assess your need.

### **18. How can I avoid getting infected?**

The virus enters your body via your eyes, nose and/or mouth, so it is important to avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

Washing of hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or cleaning hands with alcohol-based solutions, gels or tissues is recommended in all settings.

It is also recommended to stay 1.5 meter or more away from people infected with COVID-19 (social distancing) who are showing symptoms, to reduce the risk of infection through respiratory droplets.

### **19. What should I do if I have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?**

Notify public health authorities in your area who will provide guidance on further steps to take. If you develop any symptoms, you should immediately contact your healthcare provider (if possible by telephone 3535 in Burkina Faso) for advice and monitoring.

### **20. Are face masks effective in protecting against COVID-19?**

No. If you are infected, the use of surgical face masks may reduce the risk of you infecting other people, but there is *no evidence* that face masks will effectively prevent you from being infected with the virus. In fact, it is possible that the use of face masks may even increase the risk of infection due to a false sense of security and increased contact between hands, mouth and eyes.

### **21. Is there a vaccine against the virus? How long will it take to develop a vaccine?**

No. There are currently no vaccines against human coronaviruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19. This is why it is very important to prevent infection and to contain further spread of the virus.

The development of vaccines takes time. Several pharmaceutical companies are working on vaccine candidates. It will, however, take months or years before any vaccine can be widely used, as it needs to undergo extensive testing to determine its safety and efficacy.

### **22. Are WAHO Staff will be mobilized to help ECOWAS member States to fight against COVID-19?**

YES. WAHO acquiring some PPEs that will be made available to any staff who may be required to go support a Member State.