

## **Coronaviruses (COVID-19)**

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses common across the world in people and animals. Some of these viruses cause people to be ill. The common cold is a type of coronavirus, causing a mild illness. Some coronaviruses cause more serious illnesses, for example, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), both of which often lead to pneumonia.

COVID-19 is the illness seen in people infected with a new strain of coronavirus not previously seen in humans.

On 31 December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization of an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan City, which was later classified as a new disease: COVID-19. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern”

Based on current evidence, the main symptoms of COVID-19 are a cough, a high temperature and, in severe cases, shortness of breath.

As it is a new virus, the lack of immunity in the population (and the absence of an effective vaccine) means that COVID-19 has the potential to spread extensively. At this time because people have not been exposed to the COVID-19 and because there is no effective vaccine the COVID-19 has the potential to spread extensively and so many people are likely to become infected.

Among those who are infected some will have no symptoms, the majority will have mild to moderate symptoms – similar to flu and a few will develop complications, such as pneumonia, requiring hospital treatment and within these few, a very small number will die.

The big risk is for the elderly and anyone with underlying health conditions. (The same as with seasonal flu). As we have a few staff and children with underlying health conditions we are carefully following the situation and guidance.

People are most likely to be infected with COVID-19 by being in close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (respiratory secretions) containing the virus are most likely to be the way that it is spread, either by:-

- Being directly transferred into the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or being breathed into the lungs (transferred by coughs, sneezes etc)
- By touching a surface or object that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching a door knob, toilet flush and then touching own face)

## **Preventing spread of infection**

Unlike the annual flu vaccination (which many of your children had in school back in December) there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser if handwashing facilities are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport

For schools, children, staff and visitors should wash their hands:

- before leaving home
- on arrival at school
- after using the toilet
- after breaks and sporting activities
- before eating any food, including snacks
- before leaving school

An alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not available.

In school we already have a cleaning regime, cleaning all surfaces, handles etc with an anti-bacterial cleaner.

We are all aware that children need some “encouragement” to wash their hands properly and that many of them touch their faces a lot.

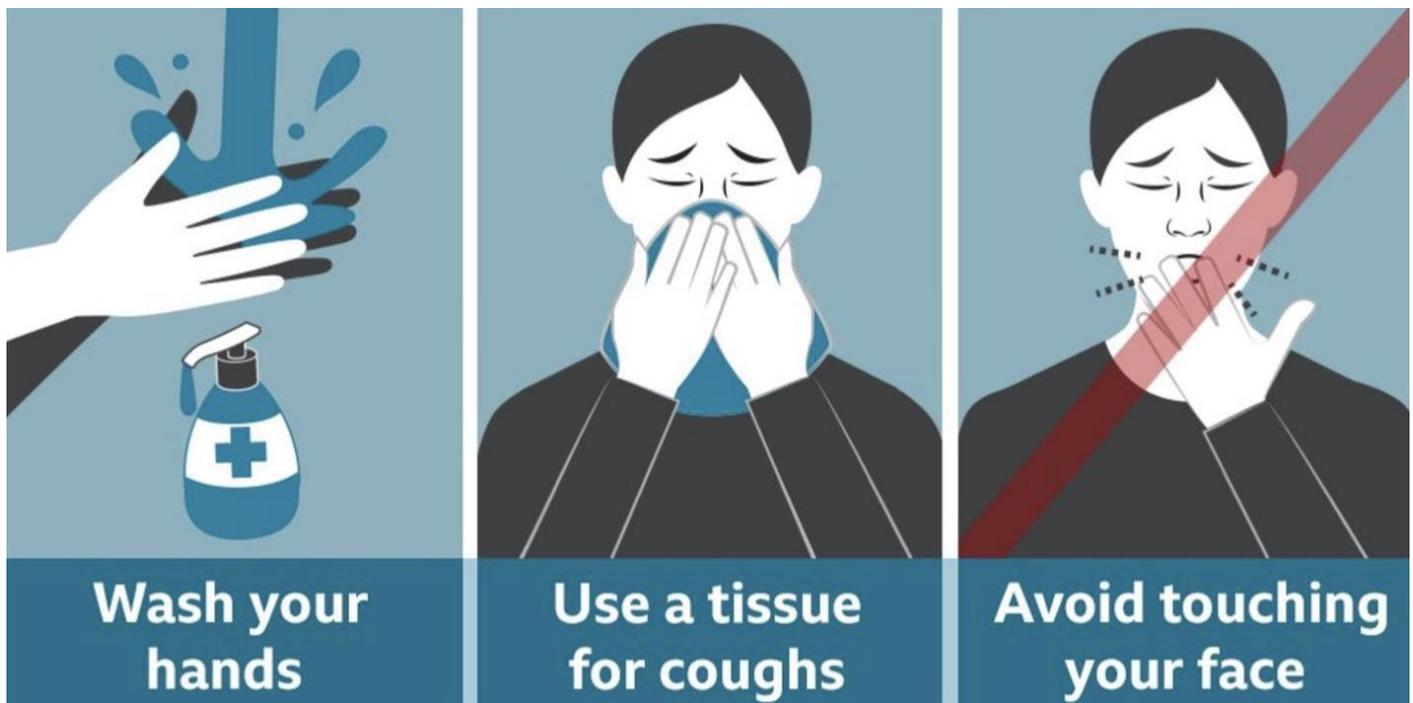
We will have a big push on handwashing.

We have shown all of the children the handwashing clip (<https://www.nhs.uk/video/pages/how-to-wash-hands.aspx>) and will remind them to wash hands at all of the times listed above.

From Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March, we will open the school doors from 8.50 (instead of 8.55) so that children can wash hands after hanging up coats, before going to the classrooms.

We will also try to get some 60% alcohol hand sanitizer. (We have been unable to get any at the moment so if anyone can help that would be great!)

We will do our best to remind them all about using tissues and not touching faces and will display the following:-



If you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.

Useful websites

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019?scrlybrkr=4d9d333a>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>