



Republic of Cyprus
Ministry of Health

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC
HEALTH SERVICES
1449 NICOSIA

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CIRCULAR

**Subject: Measures for preventing the spread of Coronavirus - 2019-nCoV
in schools**

With reference to the above-mentioned issue, we would like to inform you the following:

As of the 31st of December 2019, the Chinese Authorities reported cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology to the World Health Organization. These cases were identified in Wuhan city, in the province of Hubei. On the 7th of January 2020, the Chinese authorities identified a new strain of coronavirus named 2019-nCoV, as the main causative agent. The outbreak has rapidly spread, affecting other parts of China and at least 40,000 laboratory-confirmed cases have been identified. Cases have also been identified in Europe, Asia and America.

Presently, no cases of coronavirus infection have been identified in the Republic of Cyprus. Nevertheless, all necessary measures have been taken to prevent this from happening and, if it happens, to minimize the risk of the 2019-nCoV spread in Cyprus. So far, the risk factors for the 2019-nCoV spread in Cyprus are considered low.

Also, the Medical and Public Health Services Unit is observing the situation by collaborating with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and all essential measures are being taken to prevent and limit potential spread of infection in Cyprus.

According to epidemiological data, the novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV has caused infection in humans from animal reservoirs via airborne or faecal-oral route. It is now known that the infection can spread from human to human through droplet transmission e.g. through coughing, sneezing and contact with unclean hands. Coronavirus infection usually has symptoms that affect the respiratory system e.g. fever, cough and shortness of breath. It is estimated that symptoms of 2019-nCoV can appear from 2-14 days, following exposure to the virus. Symptoms are found to be more severe among elderly patients and those with other pre-existing illnesses.

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The majority of cases from coronavirus infection resolve themselves, whereas more severe infections will require hospital admission and supportive treatment. There is no specific treatment available for the 2019-nCoV infection yet, however, rest, hydration and staying at home are recommended. Up to now there is no available vaccine for prevention of coronavirus infection.

Strict adherence to the following preventive measures is highly recommended in order to avoid possible spread of 2019-nCoV

- Any members of staff or students who have recently travelled to Hubei province, in the capital city Wuhan or any areas where there is continuing transmission of 2019-nCoV infection in the community, or any staff or student members who have come in close contact with laboratory proven cases of coronavirus within the last 14 days and who themselves have no symptoms of illness must confine themselves to their homes for at least 14 days from the day of their return to Cyprus.
- Any members of staff or students who have recently travelled to Hubei province, its capital city Wuhan or any areas where clusters of cases of coronavirus have been identified, or any staff or student members who have come in close contact with laboratory proven cases of coronavirus within the last 14 days and have symptoms of respiratory illness e.g. cough, fever, shortness of breath they must stay confined in their homes and communicate immediately with the helpline 1420 or with their personal doctor for further advice

In general terms, to prevent the spread of respiratory illness due to coronavirus in schools, the following measures need to be adopted:

- Anybody from the school environment who has symptoms of respiratory illness must stay at home and not come to work or attend classes, until the symptoms subside.
- Close contact with anybody who has symptoms of respiratory illness must be strictly avoided
- Regular and careful handwashing with liquid soap and water is recommended for at least 20 seconds before eating and after using the toilet, and hands should be dried carefully with single use paper napkins which are disposed of in closed rubbish bins.
- If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser can be used with at least 60% alcohol and this can be placed at the entrance of the classroom with the supervision of the teacher
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands to reduce the possibility of transmission of infection

- Avoid sharing personal items e.g. pencils, pens among students
- Children should be prohibited from drinking water with their mouths directly in contact with the taps
- When coughing or sneezing, cover the mouth and nose with a single use paper napkin which is thrown away in a closed rubbish bin, or cover the mouth with the sleeve at the level of the elbow
- All classrooms should be ventilated on a regular basis during recess
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (handles, doors, taps) using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- All cleaning is to be carried out with the use of protective gloves and clothing
- The use of disposable gloves in no way replaces handwashing

Take note that these recommendations may be modified as the outbreak is in progress. Please ensure that all schools are informed about the need to strictly implement the above recommendations.

Finally, if any further advice is needed, please contact Dr Irene Cotter tel. 22605 651 or 99698390 or the countrywide 24 hour helpline 1420 and at the following email addresses, icot@cytanet.com.cy and director@mphs.gov.cy

I am at your disposal should require any further information.



Dr Elizabeth Constantinou
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