

## Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

### Information for BMIS – Current as of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

*(This information document has been put together from a variety of sources including the UK Government, Australian Government and World Health Organisation WHO). As of yet there are no confirmed cases of the virus in Malawi or anywhere in mainland Africa, but it pays to be prepared.*

An outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in late December 2019. A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

The virus seen in mainland China is called 'novel' because it is new. It has not been detected before this outbreak. Most people currently infected live in, or have travelled to mainland China. There have been some cases of 2019-nCoV reported in other countries. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

#### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath.

### Advice from the WHO

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub if your hands are not visibly dirty.

*Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub eliminates the virus if it is on your hands.*

- Practice respiratory hygiene. When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

*Why? Covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing prevent the spread of germs and viruses. If you sneeze or cough into your hands, you may contaminate objects or people that you touch.*

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

*Why? Hands touch many surfaces which can be contaminated. If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer a virus from the surface to yourself.*

- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Tell your health care provider if you have travelled in an area where 2019-nCoV has been reported, or if you have been in close contact with someone with who has travelled from China and has respiratory symptoms.

*Why? Whenever you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing it's important to seek medical attention promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Respiratory symptoms with fever can have a range of causes, and depending on your personal travel history and circumstances, 2019-nCoV could be one of them.*

- If you have mild respiratory symptoms and no travel history to or within China. If you have mild respiratory symptoms and no travel history



#### What if I develop symptoms?

If you develop symptoms (listed above) within 14 days of leaving anywhere in mainland China or within 14 days of last contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus, you should arrange to see your usual doctor for urgent assessment. You should telephone the health clinic or hospital before you arrive and tell them of your travel history or that you have been in contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus. Your doctor will liaise with Public Health authorities to manage your care. You must then remain isolated either in your home or a healthcare setting until Public Health authorities inform you that it is safe for you to return to your usual activities.

## What if I have a student or staff member who is sick within 14 days of being in mainland China?

If the student/staff member develops mild symptoms:

- Isolate the student/staff member in a single room away from others
- Inform the parent/guardian or staff member and advise them to arrange an urgent medical review
- The student/staff member should be isolated at home while waiting for a medical assessment; and
- The parent/guardian or staff member should phone ahead to the GP or hospital and inform them that the student/staff member may have novel coronavirus.

Staff and students with symptoms should be excluded from attending school until symptoms have resolved. If they have been diagnosed with 2019-nCoV they should not attend school until they are cleared by public health authorities. If staff or students have other respiratory illness (i.e. flu), they should not attend school irrespective of whether there is a concern about 2019-nCoV.

## How can we help prevent the spread of 2019-nCoV?



**Wash your hands**

Wash your hands with soap and running water when hands are visibly dirty

If your hands are not visibly dirty, frequently clean them by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

World Health Organization

The infographic features a blue background with white and yellow text. It includes an illustration of hands being washed under a stream of water with bubbles, and another illustration of a hand being treated with a spray of alcohol-based hand rub. The World Health Organization logo is at the bottom left.

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence. Encourage all children and staff to:

- Wash their hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet;
- Avoid contact with others by keeping children home if they are unwell; and
- Cough and sneeze into their elbow.