



# COVID-19 GUIDANCE

## Addressing rumours and misinformation

### General principles



**Trust the experts** on health advice. Don't re-interpret your government's advice: pass it on directly to others.



**Always give people your information sources** so they can check the facts for themselves. Consult the information sources at the end of this guide, to check Tearfund's facts for yourself.



Monitor the **World Health Organization's** '[Myth busters](#)' webpage to stay informed about false rumours that emerge.



**Record new rumours** that you hear in your community and report them to health authorities so they can track and address them.

*Adapted from Health Community Resources (2020)*



[tearfund.org/covid19](http://tearfund.org/covid19)

[covid19-response-team@tearfund.org](mailto:covid19-response-team@tearfund.org)

## Covid-19: Prevention

Covid-19 is transmitted primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Certain specific measures will reduce the likelihood of becoming infected. Below are the measures you should follow, set against those which are rumours and therefore do not prevent infection.

<b>✓ Take these measures</b> yourself and encourage others to do so as well:	<b>✗</b> The following measures <b>do not</b> prevent infection. They are only <b>rumours</b> :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or alcohol-based hand rub.</li> <li>✓ Avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth.</li> <li>✓ Avoid close contact with anyone who is coughing and sneezing.</li> <li>✓ Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.</li> <li>✓ Dispose of the used tissue immediately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Exposing yourself to sun, snow or especially high or low temperatures.</li> <li>✗ Bathing in hot water.</li> <li>✗ Drinking alcohol or eating garlic.</li> <li>✗ Rinsing your nose with salt water, or spraying alcohol or chlorine on your body.</li> <li>✗ Avoiding mosquito bites.</li> <li>✗ Shaving your beard.</li> </ul>

Do not act on rumours yourself, but do recognise when people you know are believing or spreading them. Encourage others to focus on the correct prevention measures instead.

## Covid-19: Risks

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ In relation to Covid-19, health professionals and governments refer to individuals from the following groups as 'high-risk':           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● older people (over 60 years old)</li> <li>● people with underlying health conditions that weaken their immune system, such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes or high blood pressure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ It is <b>not correct</b> to say that younger people are unaffected by the virus. Whoever you are, you should follow the correct measures listed under 'Covid-19: Prevention' and the advice of your government, and encourage others to do the same.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is <b>correct</b> that individuals identified as 'high-risk' by health professionals are more likely to become severely ill if they become infected with Covid-19, and are more likely to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ It is <b>not correct</b> to say that those individuals identified as 'high-risk' by health professionals are more likely to become infected with Covid-19, or that they are more likely to infect</li> </ul>

<p>die. You ought to take steps to protect high-risk individuals in your family and community from Covid-19, according to guidance from your government.</p>	<p>somebody else with the virus. Rather, anyone can become infected with Covid-19 and anyone can infect another person with it. Do not allow misinformation to affect the way that you or others in your community interact with high-risk individuals.</p>
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## Covid-19: Symptoms

<p>✓ <b>Confirmed symptoms of Covid-19 are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● a dry cough</li> <li>● a fever</li> <li>● tiredness</li> </ul> <p>If you, or someone you know, develops symptoms of Covid-19, make sure you self-isolate and practise physical distancing according to the guidelines of your government. Seek medical attention if your symptoms develop and you experience difficulty breathing, as you might need oxygen.</p> <p>First, stay home if you feel unwell. Second, call in advance before you seek medical attention. Follow the directions of your local health authority.</p>	<p>✗ You <b>cannot confirm</b> whether you have Covid-19 by holding your breath for ten seconds without coughing or feeling discomfort. This breathing ‘test’ is misinformation and does not mean you are free from Covid-19.</p>
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## Covid-19: Treatment and recovery

<p>✓ Most people who catch Covid-19 can recover and eliminate the virus from their bodies. With supportive care, even high-risk individuals who have the disease can recover.</p>	<p>✗ <b>Remember:</b> Catching Covid-19 <b>does not</b> mean you will have the virus for life.</p>
<p>✓ <i>Everyone has an equal right to receive treatment if they become infected with Covid-19.</i> Ensure that this truth informs the way in which you care for yourself and others. For example, if necessary, seek medical care for those in your family or community who develop a cough, a fever and difficulty breathing – whether an older</p>	<p>✗ <b>Remember:</b> If an older person or someone with underlying health conditions contracts Covid-19, this <b>does not mean</b> that they cannot recover.</p>

person with underlying health conditions or a young person with no known conditions.	
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## Our faith

As Christians we believe, and read in the Bible, that:

✓ God does help and heal.	✗ But <i>that is not to say</i> that we should not take action ourselves according to the advice of experts. We must act on the advice of experts, including that which states that churches should stop meeting in person.
✓ The brokenness of creation has led to the rise and spread of things that harm us all, including Covid-19.	✗ But <i>that is not to say</i> that 'God caused this' or 'God willed it'.
✓ The Bible does present links between systemic sin and suffering in the world.	✗ But <i>that is not to say</i> that when people fall ill, there is any biblical warrant for linking their illness to personal sin. We certainly must not use that argument as a reason to stigmatise people.
✓ At some point in the future, God will dwell with us in a transformed heaven and earth, and there will be no more suffering, sickness or death, only flourishing.	✗ We <b>do not know</b> whether Covid-19 is a sign of the end times. However, we can <b>let our future hope inspire how we live our lives</b> today as we rely on God, pray for those affected and for the outbreak to end, and reach out to our neighbours in practical love and compassion.
✓ Under normal circumstances, we should not stop meeting for worship. However, these are unprecedented times.	<p>✗ But at the same time <b>we should now listen to our earthly leaders</b> and stop meeting for a while to avoid spreading the highly infectious Covid-19. It does spread in large crowds and through close contact, such as in services with many people attending.</p> <p>✗ <b>Faith should not be opposed to medical advice.</b> Sadly, gatherings have continued in some parts of the world because people have not listened to scientific advice and as a result many have contracted the virus.</p>

## Sources

Health Community Resources (2020): [Covid-19 resources](#)

United Nations (2020):

[UN tackles 'infodemic' of misinformation and cybercrime in COVID-19 crisis](#)

World Health Organization (2020): [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public](#)

World Health Organization (2020): [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public: Myth busters](#)