



Republic of Cyprus  
Ministry of Health

**MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH  
SERVICES  
1449 NICOSIA**

### **Subject: Measures for Preventing Coronavirus Infection in Schools**

In reference to the above subject, I have been instructed to inform you of the following:

On December 31<sup>st</sup> 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, China. On the 7<sup>th</sup> January, the Chinese authorities identified a new strain of coronavirus named 2019-nCoV, as the main causative agent. The outbreak has rapidly evolved affecting other parts of China and at least 40,000 laboratories confirmed cases have been identified. Cases have also been identified outside of China, in Europe, Asia and America. Up to the present, no case of coronavirus infection has been identified in the Republic of Cyprus and the risk of spread of infection to Cyprus is considered to be low.

The Medical and Public health Services are working in close collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and all necessary measures are being taken to prevent and limit potential spread of infection to 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 presents with symptoms affecting 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.

The majority of cases of coronavirus infection resolve themselves whereas more severe infections will require hospital admission and supportive treatment. There is no specific treatment available for the infection however, rest, hydration and staying at home is 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 this novel coronavirus infection.

- 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 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.
- 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 the 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 the 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 the countrywide 24 hour helpline 1420 and the following email addresses, [icot@cytanet.com.cy](mailto:icot@cytanet.com.cy) and [director@mphs.gov.cy](mailto:director@mphs.gov.cy)