

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?

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Coronavirus is a group of viruses which normally cause mild illness, with symptoms similar to a common cold. It is very different from, and more serious than, the usual seasonal influenza outbreaks that happen every year.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms can include a fever, fatigue, dry cough, difficulty breathing and will be accompanied by a fever. Symptoms take an average of 5 days to begin – this differs to flu viruses which tend to incubate very quickly. The virus is transmitted by breathing in droplets that go into the air during coughing and sneezing. The virus needs to be in living beings to survive, however, it will survive on surfaces and appropriate cleaning and disinfectant should be applied.

Over 80% of people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild symptoms similar to the common cold and may not be aware they have the virus – this is one of the reasons it spreads easily. A smaller group will experience more severe symptoms with a minority [5%] suffering from pneumonia.

WHO IS AT RISK?

The illness is more severe in older people [over 65 years] or people with chronic diseases such as heart and lung conditions. About 15% of infected people will have a “flu” like illness. It appears that children get very mild symptoms.

As this is a new virus, the health information is continually being updated.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

The main way the virus spreads is by contamination when someone carrying the virus coughs or sneezes. The air droplets are breathed in by another person or can be transferred to another person.

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- arrangements for those required to be away from work, as a result of infection control measures.
 - » paid special leave for confirmed cases,
 - » paid special leave for self-isolation as a result of contact with confirmed cases, or whilst awaiting test results
 - » paid special leave for self-isolation if returning from travel to certain locations
- what to do if there is a suspected case or a person with COVID-19 has been at the workplace. In some circumstances this will require relocating workers from the impacted area until a deep clean is undertaken
- the contingency plans for leave, reallocation and re-organisation of work, if health authorities shut down schools, public events, work sites to ensure workers can meet requirements to care for children or other dependent family members.