

COVID-19 / Coronavirus: Awareness and Response

The emergence of cases of COVID-19 (the “coronavirus”) in Europe, and recent deaths in northern Italy associated with the virus, should be a matter of concern to all of our communities.

There are basic steps each of our communities can follow to minimize risks to all of our people and the ministries to which they contribute or by which they are served.

First, the best advice on precautions to take is provided on the website of the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>). Information is available in English, French, and Spanish.

To summarize the WHO suggestions:

- Wash your hands frequently, using soap and water or an alcohol-based rub. All eucharistic ministers should use an alcohol-based rub before the distribution of the sacrament, whether in the context of the liturgy or in visiting someone at home or in the hospital.
- Practice respiratory hygiene. Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing; discard tissues immediately in closed bins.
- Practice social distancing. In general, maintain a distance of a meter between you and others, particular those who are coughing, sneezing, or evidently ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Any parishes involved in ministries in which food is served should give particular attention to The WHO recommendations regarding food safety.
- Needless to say, we should send a clear message that if anyone feels ill or unwell, they should, as a general rule, seek medical care immediately and not attend parish events.
- Related to this, if someone who is elderly or lives alone does not appear at church in what would otherwise be a regular function, create systems for wellness checks.

Caring for each other and for all the people of God means being careful in the midst of an epidemic. With a reasonable amount of caution we can keep our people, our communities, and those we serve healthy—and continue to minister to those who are ill and in need of our care.



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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




Protect others from getting sick

When coughing and sneezing **cover mouth and nose** with flexed elbow or tissue



Throw tissue into closed bin immediately after use



Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick




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World Health Organization Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak

It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.



If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.



Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.



Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.




World Health Organization Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak

Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc. Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.



Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention. Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.



If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.



Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age. This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).




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