

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



Australian organisations are closely monitoring the outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus. The coronavirus is a new virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. As this discovery is only months old, we are still learning a great deal about it. Information and recommendations about how to respond to it at an individual, team, organisational and broader societal level are constantly being reviewed and updated.

So where are things at in early March 2020?

- At the time of preparing these materials Australia has had approximately 30 citizens contract the virus through contact with people outside Australia who have the virus. By the time you read this, this number will have changed. More importantly, what has happened to these 30 individuals and what might that suggest for the future?¹
- Reassuring, half of them having already recovered, one has sadly passed away and the remaining individuals remain in a stable medical condition.¹
- It is highly likely the number of Australian citizens who contract the disease will continue to rise, with some projections indicating a major outbreak of the virus, similar to a bad flu season with tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands of people affected.
- Importantly, we are still learning about this virus, its contagiousness and the impact it typically has on someone contracting it, the recovery process (for most people). There are some facts that need to be born in mind to ensure we are clear-headed and rational about its progression and the risks it poses. It is with this in mind that we have prepared a number of 'facts' arising from the data on the virus and its progression, some important do's and don'ts to bear in mind as we plan the weeks and months ahead.

FACTS

- The death rate from Coronavirus outside China is approximately 1.5%.¹
- For regular, healthy people, without compromised health status, there is a very low risk of a serious negative health outcome.

¹www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert

DO

- Take the precautions suggested by the health authorities regarding personal and general hygiene, such as regular and thorough hand washing and managing your exposure to potential sources of the virus.
- Provide your family, friends and loved ones with sound, reliable information from reputable sources as you don't want to unwittingly contribute to unnecessary anxiety or fear for those closest to you.
- Speak to your children and extended family members about how you will work as a family to support and care for anyone in your family who may contract the virus.
- If you have a cold or one of the common 'bugs' and you'd normally go to work, let your employer know before going into work as they may express a preference, or even have mandated procedures, for anyone with actual or suspected viruses to be managed.
- Pay attention to reliable sources for guidance and updates. Note our trusted links at the end of this article.
- Be careful about media reports, sensationalised headlines and exaggerated information. Be selective about media that focuses on evidence-based data rather than non-fact based opinion.
- Pay heed to travel warnings and other advice to avoid putting yourself or your family at risk.

DON'T

- Speculate or try to predict the future. By doing so you'll only increase your anxiety and that of others around you.
- Catastrophise. It's common for people to think that the very worst is going to happen. Humans are hard-wired to notice and focus on the negative; it's in our evolutionary DNA. This is not just unhelpful in this situation but in general. If you find yourself thinking like this, stop and take a reality check and remember you don't have all the information. There are positive things you can do as well as following what official sources are recommending you do.
- Be careful about rumours or shared opinions masquerading as facts on Facebook or other social media. This includes well-intentioned but often misinformed exchanges with family, friends or work colleagues. Misinformation during times like this is unhelpful and even potentially dangerous.

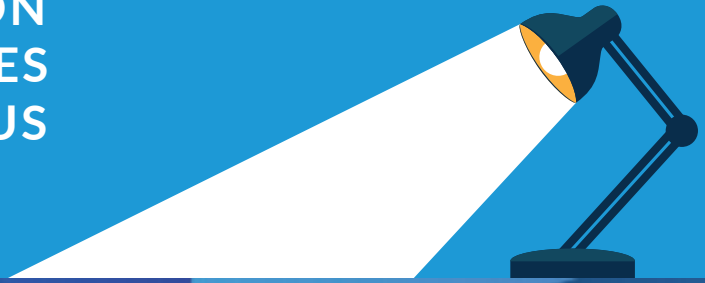


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Spotlight: Talking points, timely reads

MANAGING THE IMPACT ON YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYEES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS

Symptoms can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Affected people may experience:

- Fever
- Flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and headaches
- Difficulty breathing

For people who have been to China, or have reason to believe they have been in contact with someone who may have contracted the virus, and feel unwell, it's important to seek prompt medical attention. If you or someone close to you is experiencing a health emergency, call 000.

Reassuringly, governments and businesses have had experience dealing with infectious diseases and although viruses differ in certain key regards, they also have patterns in common which invite tried and proven approaches.

WHEN TO REACH OUT FOR HELP

If you find your anxiety or fear about the coronavirus is building to the point that intruding on your thoughts or preventing you from getting on with your daily life, seek assistance. That is where we can potentially help.

Converge offers 24-hour, 7 day a week counselling support. The great thing is, because we offer phone and videoconferencing facilities, we can provide that support for you, even if you're at home.

To access the EAP services, simply call 1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327) to make a time to speak with one of our team.

ESSENTIAL LINKS

International

World Health Organisation

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Up to date advice as well as posters you can download for your workplace or school.

National

Federal Government Department of Health

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

State

Victorian Department of Health

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/>

NSW Department of Health

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

South Australian Department of Health

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/clinical+resources/clinical+topics/infectious+disease+control/novel+coronavirus+%282019-ncov%29+infection+for+health+professionals>

Tasmanian Department of Health

<https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/>

Queensland Department of Health

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/>

Western Australian Department of Health

<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/>

Travelling Overseas?

International travellers should check the latest Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) travel advice on the Smartraveller website.

MORE
INFORMATION

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