



PRESS RELEASE

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Measures in place for schools in light of COVID-19

The Department of Education has circulated to all schools Public Health guidelines for educational settings in Gibraltar. These include information on groups who are vulnerable to COVID-19. Generally, this virus can cause more severe symptoms in people with a weakened immune system (such as those suffering from cancer, or are on special medication), and older people (generally over the age of 70), especially those with long term conditions like heart disease, poorly controlled diabetes, poorly managed blood pressure and chronic lung disease.

Children are less affected than other age groups and very few cases in children have been reported. Children may not have any symptoms but may pass on the virus.

Currently, and for the foreseeable future, our schools remain open and are operating as usual. All schools have been provided with alcohol-based hand sanitisers and children are encouraged to bring along their refillable water bottle to school. Should they not have one, children will still have access to drinking water in disposable paper cups.

Additionally, the school cleaning teams will be cleaning and disinfecting surfaces within the school grounds with a disinfectant known to be effective in dealing with Coronaviruses in clinical environments.

The general principles being encouraged in schools are:

- washing hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol-based sanitiser.
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin as per Catch it, Bin it, Kill it posters

Pupils, students, staff and visitors are advised that they should wash their hands:

- before leaving home
- on arrival at school
- after using the toilet
- after breaks and sporting activities
- before food preparation
- before eating any food, including snacks
- before leaving school



At present, the risk of infection is limited in those who have not been to any of the At-Risk listed countries in the last 14 days. Flu and other viruses are much more common. Encouraging flu vaccination will not protect against COVID-19, but it will stop the chance of getting infected with both together.

If you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child or colleague, please contact the GHA 111 helpline and follow their recommendations.

REMEMBER

The Government is confident that Gibraltar is as ready as possible for the impact of the virus.

The Government continues to take the advice of our Public Health professionals and the situation is under constant review.

The best thing that everyone can do to protect themselves and their loved ones is to wash hands regularly and well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. It is also a good idea not to shake hands, hug or give kisses when greeting colleagues, friends and relatives for the time being, especially if they are over 70. We know that the elderly and people with chronic health conditions are the most vulnerable, so we must all do our part to keep ourselves and our loved ones out of harm's way.

If you do not feel well, please *do not* go to the Primary Care Centre or to St Bernard's Hospital as this puts you and others at greater risk. Go home, avoid public transport and call **111** as soon as you can to tell us about your symptoms.

For almost 90% of people, the symptoms will be very mild and most people who contract the virus will be able to recover well and quickly at home. 99% of people will likely fully recover. The focus now is to increase the distance between people in order to try to slow the spread as much as possible, and to take extra care with older and vulnerable friends and relatives. Think twice before you pay them a visit and strongly consider whether you could phone or video call them instead.

Please look to official sources for advice, particularly www.wuhan.gi.

- PROTECT your loved ones – call, don't visit
- WASH your hands
- CALL **111** if you feel unwell