



## Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Incident Management System

Zambia National Public Health Institute



# Facts about COVID-19: Answering your questions

Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) sub-committee  
Zambia National Public Health Institute

June 3rd 2020

### What is the 'Facts about COVID-19' Report?

This report aims to answer some of the public's questions about COVID-19. We receive these questions from various grassroots organisations, social media groups, NGOs, partners, call centres, government bodies, and community leaders. This report will be released regularly in order to provide up-to-date, factual, and official information based on the concerns of the Zambian public. This report complements the 'Message Guide for Responders in Zambia'. COVID-19 is a new disease and what we know is changing all the time, so please check the dates on these reports and if in doubt, go to the World Health Organisation website, <https://www.who.int/>, the MoH website, <https://www.moh.gov.zm/>, and the ZNP HI website, <https://znphi.co.zm/>, for the latest advice.

This report is written up by the Community Engagement team in the Zambia National Public Health Institute, alongside MoH Health Promotion. This group includes representation from local and international civil society organizations, as well as partners that implement or support community-based interventions. If you would like to join this group in order to provide input and help to disseminate reliable messages, please use the contact details at the end of this report.

Our goal, as a group, is to provide technical assistance to implementing partners, gather and share feedback from the community to inform advocacy and policy-making efforts, and support a coordinated COVID-19 response at the community level.

This report will be published on various social media sites, radio stations, websites, and distributed through our network of individuals and organisations working with communities across Zambia.

We hope this report provides you with useful information and answers your questions. If you would like to ask questions for future editions, use the contact details below or use the MoH 'Ask an expert' function on their website: <https://www.moh.gov.zm/> and/or check the MoH and ZNPHI social media accounts for opportunities to ask questions.

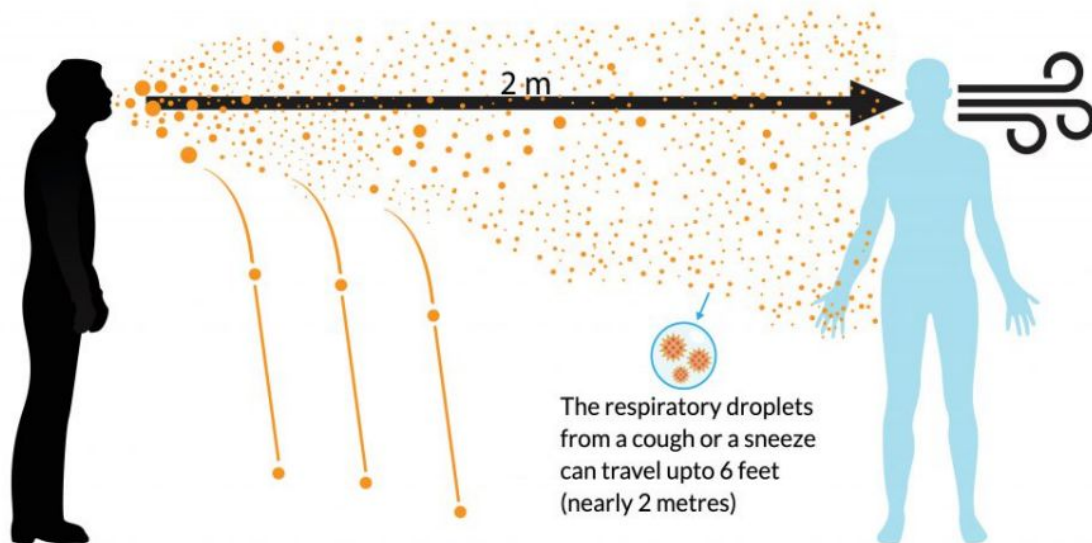
## Prevention of COVID-19

**Question: I live outside of Lusaka, do I still need to be strict with preventative measures?**

**Answer:** Yes. COVID-19 can spread quickly, and has already spread to many parts of the country. Just one person with COVID-19 can potentially infect many others. You cannot always tell if a person is infected with the disease, because they may not be showing symptoms yet. All areas of the country need to follow Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) prevention guidelines.

**Question: How much distance should I put between myself and others?**

**Answer:** Social distancing/physical distancing, is maintaining a 1-2 metres distance between yourself and other people. Droplets that spread the virus come from the mouth when someone coughs or sneezes. This is the reason it is recommended that you keep a distance of 1-2 meters from other people to reduce the chances of getting infected, and is also why masking-up is recommended to reduce the spread of these droplets.



1-2 metres is roughly the same as the following:

- the length of a full grown cow or ox
- the length of 1.5 bicycles
- the length of two shopping trolleys

People with no symptoms, including children, can transmit the virus. For this reason, it is important to reduce contacts, maintain distance, wear a mask and wash your hands frequently.

Social distancing should be practised between yourself and other people who are not living in the same house as you. You do not need to distance from members of your family such as your husband, wife or children, especially if your house is small. However, this may be different if one of your household is elderly or has pre-existing health conditions. In that case, you may also need to take precautions in the house - see below guidance. If someone in your house starts to show symptoms, immediately call toll free number 909 or the following numbers: 0953 898941; 0964 638726; 0974 493553.

**Question: Is it true that going jogging / running prevents COVID-19?**

**Answer:** No. Jogging and running do not prevent COVID-19. However, exercise *can* increase lung capacity, improve your mental well-being, and reduce your stress. Everyone should aim to take 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily for at least 5 days a week. This can be as simple as walking fast enough to speak, but not sing. Runners should make sure that they run alone, wear a face mask if in public, and keep a distance from pedestrians and other people.



**Question: How can I protect myself if I live in a compound or a crowded area with a lot of people?**

**Answer:** Many of the preventative measures to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19 are more challenging if you are living in compounds, or any crowded area, but here are some basic steps that you can take to protect yourself.

The virus is spread from droplets coming from other people's noses and mouths when they speak, cough, or sneeze. These droplets can land on surfaces and you can become infected if you touch these surfaces and then touch your face and mouth. That is why it is important to keep distance between people and when that is not possible, to wash hands, cough or sneeze into your bent elbow, and wear a mask. Encourage everyone

around you to wear a mask too. If you cannot afford to buy a mask, you can make your own using chitenge or other fabric.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. Help children or older people in your household to do the same. If you need to queue for water or for another service, keep a 1-2 meter distance from other people. Washing hands is one of the best ways to prevent the transmission of the virus, so try to put aside some of your water supply for regular hand washing. If you are struggling to get to water, you can use hand sanitiser. Avoid gatherings that take place indoors or

have lots of people, and encourage any gatherings to take place outdoors in well ventilated spaces and with social distancing in place.

Social distancing should be practised between yourself and other people who are not living in the same house as you. You do not need to distance from members of your family such as your husband, wife or children, especially if your house is small. However, this may be different if one of your household is elderly or has pre-existing health conditions. In that case, you may also need to take precautions in the house - see below guidance. If you or someone in your house starts to show symptoms, immediately call toll free number 909 or the following numbers: 0953 898941; 0964 638726; 0974 493553.

If you belong to any of the following extra vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, people living with diabetes, elderly people and immunocompromised persons, stay at home as much as possible. For example, minimize going to busy markets or shopping places. Ask any other member of the family to do so on your behalf unless it's absolutely necessary.

### Question: Can masks stop oxygen from getting to my brain?

**Answer:** No. Lots of jobs require a person to wear a mask for many hours a day, including miners and health care workers in surgical theatres. Using masks for a few hours is OK, but make sure your mask is comfortable. The mask should fit well around your mouth and nose. Never share your masks with anyone else because they can become contaminated with the virus and other bacteria.





**Question: Why do I have to wear a mask when I go outside? And do I have to wear one in my own private vehicle?**

**Answer:**

Wearing a mask is important for two reasons:

- to protect myself from contacting infection from people whose disease status is unknown (asymptomatic), those who have tested positive for COVID-19, or those with suspected COVID-19.
- protect others since my own status may also be unknown.

Masks help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by preventing the droplets that come from a person's mouth and nose from landing on other people or on surfaces. These droplets may contain the virus that causes COVID-19, even if a person isn't showing any symptoms. However, it is important to wear them properly.

Put on a mask when outside and in the presence of other persons. If you have to touch your mask wash your hands immediately afterwards. If outside and alone, for example in your garden or in your own private vehicle, a mask is not required.

Disposable masks should be used only once. Cloth masks however are affordable and can be reused after thoroughly washing them with detergent, but you need to wash your hands after handling a used mask. Make sure to iron the cloth masks after washing them.



**Question: Should I make my child wear a mask?**

**Answer:** While children are also at risk of getting the coronavirus, face masks should not be worn by babies and children under 2 years, or by disabled people who are not able to remove the mask themselves. Try to explain to children that where possible they should avoid going close to, or touching, people outside their household.

Parents or guardians carrying their babies or children below the age of 2 years should practise social distancing between themselves and others and try to limit public interactions. Remember to practise regular handwashing with soap and water before handling the child. Any one outside of your household who comes into close contact with your child should wear a face mask.

**Question: What is a 'lockdown' and could it cause more harm than the COVID-19?**

**Answer:**

There is no set definition of 'lockdown' and they can take many different forms. Usually, a 'lockdown' is a measure used by the government to slow the spread of COVID-19. All non-essential businesses are restricted or asked to close, schools and universities close, and the public is asked to stay at home. In other countries 'lockdowns' have helped to slow the spread of COVID-19, especially when they are

coupled with other interventions such as testing, tracing and community engagement. However, 'lockdowns', as well as any movement restriction policies, can have significant impact on communities.

Movement restrictions may be needed to save lives and reduce the spread of the virus, but we must also think of those who may suffer as a result and work to protect them and their families.

Policy-makers, donors, NGOs, grassroots organisations and communities can acknowledge and try to prevent the potential damage to food security, income generation, gender equality and social cohesion caused by any restrictions.

**Question: Is it true that only the rich can get COVID-19?**

**Answer:** No. Anyone can become infected with COVID-19. At first, screening and testing for the virus was taking place at airports and focused on travelers. But now the virus has spread to almost every country in the world and affects everyone regardless of how much money the person has..

The COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in any climate, including areas with hot and humid weather.

The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre from others and frequently cleaning your hands. By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

**FACT:**  
COVID-19 can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates

World Health Organization #Coronavirus #COVID19 27 April 2020

**Question: Can Africans get COVID-19?**

**Answer:** Yes. Anyone, whatever their nationality, can become infected with COVID-19. It doesn't matter your age, gender, race, or religion. The COVID-19 virus can be transmitted anywhere, regardless of climate. This includes areas with hot, sunny and humid weather.

The best way to protect yourself is follow basic preventative steps such as staying at home, wearing a facemask when you do have to make an essential trip, washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water as regularly as you can, and keeping your physical distance from others of 1-2 meters.

## Testing and treatment of COVID-19

**Question: How do I know where the testing sites are?**

**Answer:** The Ministry of Health has set up testing sites in various parts of the country. To find out the nearest testing site to your location call the call centre toll free on 909.

**Question: If there is no cure for COVID-19 how is it treated? Can people recover?**

**Answer:**

There is no known specific treatment for COVID-19. However, those who are sick are given medical attention to relieve and treat the symptoms they have. You can survive COVID-19. Early treatment of symptoms and medical care increases the chance that you will survive COVID-19.

Approximately 80% of COVID-19 cases are mild and do not require hospitalisation. The more serious cases may require an in-patient stay at the hospital. Oxygen is given to some in-patients who experience breathing difficulties. The most serious cases may require intensive care and may be placed on a ventilator. The majority of people affected by COVID-19 recover.

Call 0094493553 | 0953898941|0964638726 Toll Free line: 909 as soon as you notice the signs and symptoms.

**Question: Can survivors of COVID-19 still spread the disease?**

**Answer:**

We are still learning about the immune response to COVID-19. The duration of immunity after COVID-19 infection is still unknown. As far as we know, people who have survived the virus are no more a risk to others than the rest of the community, and they can be welcomed back into the community whilst following normal social distancing and preventative measures, such as regular hand-washing.

Survivors should be celebrated, and we should all work hard to make sure they are not stigmatised. Treat the family and friends of survivors of COVID-19 with respect.

Survivors and their families should take the same preventative measures as everyone else, and call the toll-free hotline 909 if they have any signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If you survive COVID-19, continue to protect yourself by following all prevention measures.

## Other disease areas and health issues

## Question: If I have sex, can I get infected with COVID-19?

**Answer:** We know that coronavirus is transmitted through direct contact with mucus and saliva. So far, it looks like COVID-19 does not spread efficiently from sperm and vaginal fluid the way HIV does. You can be infected with COVID-19 during sex, from kissing and breathing in close contact with an infected person. Skip sex if either you or your partner is feeling unwell. Remember it is still important to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections by using condoms, and prevent unintended pregnancies by having an effective form of birth control.

## Question: Who is at high risk from COVID-19 and how can they be protected?

**Answer:** Most people get only mild symptoms of COVID-19, and recover without hospitalization. People 60 years of age and older, as well as those with pre-existing medical conditions—like high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, or have a weakened immune system—are more likely to become seriously ill and so are at higher risk. These people are not more likely to transmit the virus than other people, but they are more likely to become seriously sick if they catch it.

The best way to protect ourselves and each other is to follow basic prevention advice. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap, or use a hand sanitizer - particularly when coming home, before and after preparing food, and after using the toilet. Stay at home and avoid non-essential trips. If you have to leave the house, remember to wear a clean facemask and to keep a physical distance of 1-2 metres between yourself and others.

See the box below for specific steps that can be taken by people living with or caring for someone with a pre-existing health condition or an elderly person.

The Ministry of Health and partners will work on producing specific advice for all the different groups who are at risk of becoming more seriously ill from COVID-19 as soon as possible.

People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus (nCoV-2019). Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus. WHO advise people of all age to take steps to protect themselves from the virus, for example by following good hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene.

**Does the new coronavirus affect older people, or are younger people also susceptible?**



 World Health Organization

**#Coronavirus**



**If you have a pre-existing health condition or are over 60 years of age, here are some examples of steps you can take:**

Try not to leave your house or your local area, especially if there are cases of COVID-19 in your area.

Avoid gatherings of people, especially those that are indoors.

Ask other people to do your food shopping and other activities which might require you to go to a busy public space where there are lots of other people. Friends and family can deliver things to your home.

You should continue to take any medication you are taking and take care of your health as normal, including eating a healthy diet. For example if you are a HIV or TB patient, it is especially important to keep taking your medication.

Your treatment for your medical condition will continue. Some things may change such as the frequency with which you attend the clinic, but you will be informed of this. If you are unsure or need advice, contact your local community health worker or call the facility to get assistance.

If there is space in your house, try to stay in a separate room from the rest of the family.

If you have to leave the house, for example to go to the toilet, wear a mask, but only if you can take it off yourself, maintain social distance from other people, and wash your hands before you leave the house, after using the toilet, after touching surfaces, and when you come back.

If you have enough, you should use different cutlery, plates and cups from the rest of the family. Try not to share household items, but if you do have to, make sure you wash everything between use with soap and water.

If you experience any signs and symptoms of COVID-19, call the hotline toll-free on 909.

**If you take care of someone who has a pre-existing medical condition or who is elderly, here are some examples of steps you can take:**

You should carry on helping someone with things like washing, dressing, going to the toilet and eating if they need help doing this. Be sure to wash your hands before you help them and wear a mask where possible.

Designate someone to run errands e.g. to get food and water, to reduce the amount of times the vulnerable person and other family members need to leave the house. When you do leave the house, wear a mask and wash your hands before you leave and when you come back, as well as after touching surfaces, and maintain social distancing.

Wash your hands as soon as you enter the house. Try not to have guests visit the house, but if they must, ensure that they wash their hands and maintain social distancing.

If you start to show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, call the hotline toll-free on 909 and do not see the vulnerable person who you live with or care for.

Clean the surfaces and household items, including plates and cutlery, in the house at least once a day. You should clean surfaces and frequently touch areas such as doorknobs, light switches, phones handles and remote controls.

Make sure that your house is well ventilated by opening the windows and doors to let in fresh air.

If possible, try and keep 1-2 metres away from the vulnerable person and minimise the time you spend together in shared areas.

Follow all preventative measures as strictly as you can to minimize your risk of acquiring the virus

Make sure that the vulnerable person is continuing to seek the medical care they need and, if they take regular medicine, adhering to their medication. Find out from your community healthcare worker how you can support a person with a pre-existing medical condition to adhere to treatment.

## Economy and work

**Question: I have to take the bus to go to work – how can I stay safe?**

**Answer:**

Lots of people still have to travel around to get to work or to take care of relatives. If you can, try to avoid public transport and consider walking or taking a bike instead if you can do this safely, however lots of people still have to take the bus.

If you are a passenger on a bus, this can help you to reduce your risk:

- Wash your hands before and after entering the bus to avoid getting or spreading the virus by touching surfaces. If you cannot wash your hands, use hand sanitiser.
- Wear a clean mask, either your own or a new mask, or use a piece of clothing to cover your nose and mouth. You should make sure that only you have worn the mask - reusing masks from other people or renting masks may spread the virus. This helps to protect you and those around you.
- Social distancing is difficult on buses, but try to avoid buses that are overcrowded. It is good to keep at least one seat of space between yourself and other people on the bus and, if you can, distance yourself from others by 1-2 metres.
- Avoid touching your face during and after your journey.
- Only get in vehicles where the other passengers and the driver are also wearing masks, as this protects you and others around you.



**Question: I have to continue selling at the market to feed my family – how can I keep myself and my customers safe?**

**Answer:** Marketplaces are usually crowded, and it can be very difficult to maintain physical distance. Traders and sellers are touching surfaces, products and money all day, which may mean they come into contact with the virus.

If it is possible, you can mark off a 1 metre distance between you and your customers by marking off where customers should stand with chalk. You should also wear a mask and encourage your customers to also wear a mask.

You should also wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer throughout the day, especially after dealing with a customer, and ask your customers to wash their hands before touching products. You can also wear gloves, and be careful not to touch your face with the gloves on. Hand washing facilities with soap and running water should be provided in all markets

At the beginning and the end of the day, you can clean your market stall to keep the surfaces clean. Make sure to wash your hands, your mask and the gloves at the end of each day.

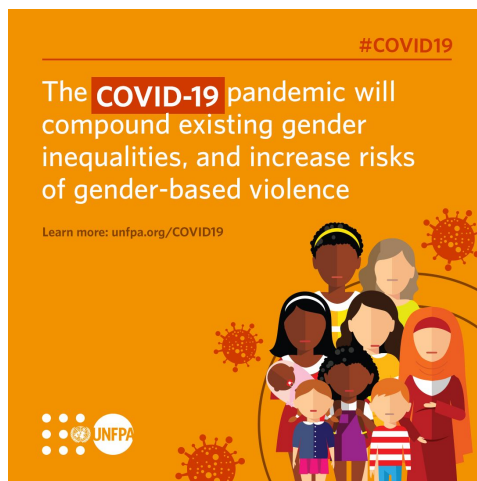
If you can, you can consider moving your stall outside into the open air. Being outside with open ventilation helps to reduce the spread of the virus. You can also work with other vendors and the local authorities to expand the space of the market and keep stalls further apart from each other. Market committees can also come up with innovative solutions in their own context, such as rotation systems.

# Family and children

**Question: I'm trying to stay at home, but I'm worried about spousal violence. What can I do?**

**Answer:**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a human rights violation and is against the law in Zambia. Abuse may be physical, sexual or psychological, and is never the fault of the victim. You can be a victim of abuse if you are a man, woman or child.



You can get help from Lifeline/Childline Zambia by calling their toll-free numbers which are 933 for the GBV number and 116 for the Children's help line. They are both 24/7 and on all networks. These lines are here to help and are completely confidential.

In some areas community health volunteers (CHVs) have been trained to work on GBV. If you are scared or have already been exposed to violence try to contact a CHV or ask someone else to contact them on your behalf. You can also report cases of GBV to the Community Crime Prevention Unit, or talk to a health worker at the local health facility.

*Many thanks to inputs received for this edition from Ramya Kumar, MPH (Zambart/Eradicate TB), Cathy Green (MAM@Scale), Rhiannon Osborne (DFID and CIDRZ), the Lusaka Helps team, The Community Response Team Associations, Zambia Red Cross, Sarah Hatchard (JSI-USAID DISCOVER-Health), Chilufya Musosha (eNgoma Solutions Ltd), Malama Mwila (Save the Children), Mavis Nkomeshya (UNAIDS, Mwansa Njelesani-Kaira (JSI-USAID DISCOVER-Health), Precious Mumbi Habeenzu (UNICEF), Nora Mweemba (WHO)*

## **For further information, please contact:**

- RCCE sub-committee chair - Ms. Winfridah Liwoyo-Mulenga, Chief Health Promotion Officer, Department of Health Promotion, Environment & Social Determinants, Ministry of Health, 0977883176, [winliwoy@yahoo.com](mailto:winliwoy@yahoo.com)
- RCCE sub-committee co-chair - Ms. Mazyanga L. Mazaba Liwewe, Head of Communication Information and Research, ZNPHI, 0977879400, [mazyanga.mazaba@znphi.co.zm](mailto:mazyanga.mazaba@znphi.co.zm)
- Sub-group for Community Engagement, Rhiannon Osborne (Coordinator), [rhiannonosborne708@gmail.com](mailto:rhiannonosborne708@gmail.com)