



COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools



Ministry of Education & Training
Government of Vanuatu

FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and the virus has now spread to many countries around the world.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it.

Who is most at risk?

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. This is a new virus and we need to learn more about how it affects children. The virus can be fatal in rare cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent or medications to treat COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and getting early care from a healthcare provider can make the disease less dangerous. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19.

How can the spread of COVID-19 be slowed down or prevented?

As with other respiratory infections like the flu or the common cold, public health measures are critical to slow the spread of illnesses. Public health measures are everyday preventive actions that include:

- ✓ staying home when sick;
- ✓ covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue immediately;
- ✓ washing hands often with soap and water; and
- ✓ cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects.

As we learn more about COVID-19 public health officials may recommend additional actions.

MESSAGES AND ACTIONS SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND STAFF

Following basic principles can help keep students, teachers and staff safe at school and help stop the spread of this disease. Recommendations for healthy schools are:

- ✓ **All schools in Vanuatu will resume normal operations from Monday 18th May 2020** unless they have been damaged by TC Harold.
- ✓ **Schools that have been damaged by TC Harold will operate on a special timetable**, as advised by the Principal.
- ✓ **Sick students, teachers and other staff should not come to school** or work.
- ✓ Schools should enforce regular hand washing with safe water and soap, at least daily disinfection and cleaning of school surfaces.
- ✓ Schools should provide water, sanitation and waste management facilities and follow environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures.
- ✓ Officers from the Ministry of Health promoting health in schools will do supervisory visits in the schools opened.

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND STAFF

- 1. **Promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviors** and monitor their uptake. Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets for girls and boys
 - Ensure soap and safe water is available at hand washing stations
 - Encourage frequent and thorough washing of hands (at least 20 seconds)
 - Place hand sanitizers in toilets, classrooms, halls, and near exits where possible
 - Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets or latrines for girls and boys
- 2. **Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities** at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.). Use a disinfectant product if possible (e.g. bleach).
- 3. **Increase air flow and ventilation** in rooms where climate allows (open windows and doors, etc.).
- 4. **Display posters encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices within the school on the school board and in the communities.**
- 5. **Ensure rubbish is removed daily** and disposed of safely.
- 6. **Ensure that all children go back to school** unless their schools have been damaged by TC Harold.
- 7. Encourage teachers, school staff, parents and communities to **listen to the updates from the Government of Vanuatu** via radio, TV, phone, newspaper or social media.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Principals, teachers and school staff are encouraged to communicate the check list below for parents and community members to be ready to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1. **Make sure your children go back to school** unless their schools have been damaged by TC Harold. Schools that have been damaged will operate on a special timetable.
- 2. Teach and model **good hygiene practices** for your children
 - Practice proper hand washing:
 - i. Wash your hands with soap and safe water frequently.
 - ii. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty.
 - iii. Wash hands regularly even if they are not visibly dirty.
 - iv. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Ensure that safe drinking water is available.
 - Ensure that toilets are clean and available at home
 - Ensure rubbish is safely collected, stored and disposed of
 - Cough and sneeze into a tissue, a handkerchief or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth and nose
- 3. **Encourage your children to ask questions** and express their feelings. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient, understanding and positive.
- 4. Coordinate with the school to **receive information**. Ask how you can **support your children's learning at home**.
- 5. **Encourage the learning of your children at home** through in-doors and educational activities. Spend time together.
- 6. **Listen to the updates from the Government of Vanuatu** via radio, TV, phone, newspaper or social media.

CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS AND CHILDREN

Principals, teachers and school staff are encouraged to communicate the check list below to children to be ready to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. **Protect yourself and others**

- Wash your hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Remember to not touch your face, eyes, mouth and nose.
- Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others

2. **Be a leader** in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy.

- Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family and friends, especially with younger children.
- Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands, especially for younger family members.

3. **Tell** your parents, a guardian, or a caregiver **if you feel sick**.

4. **Make sure you do your learning activities** from home with support of a family member.

5. In a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that you are not alone and talk to someone you trust, like your parent or teacher so that you can help keep yourself and your school safe and healthy.

6. **Ask questions, educate yourself and get information** from reliable sources like teachers, parents or accurate website.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COVID-19

The MoET encourages principals, teachers, parents, students and school communities to stay informed on the development of the COVID-19 situation through:

- ✓ The MoET website: <https://moet.gov.vu/>
- ✓ The MoET Facebook page: <https://web.facebook.com/moetvanuatu/>
- ✓ The Ministry of Health COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.gov.vu/>
- ✓ The Ministry of Health Promotions Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Health-Promotions-Vanuatu-1674266679566197/>
- ✓ The email to the COVID-19 Health Emergency Operations Centre: covid19@vanuatu.gov.vu
- ✓ The COVID-19 information Hotline on 119
- ✓ Radio
- ✓ TV
- ✓ Mobile phones – through the official SMS sent by the Government of Vanuatu
- ✓ Key relevant and accurate websites:
 - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Please note you should ONLY rely on those reliable and accurate information sources. It is important to avoid fake or inaccurate news in such emergency period.