PREPARING FOR COVID-19

A PERSONAL GUIDE

THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS
MARCH 16, 2020

#COVID19PreparationNotPanic
# #COVID19BePreparedBarbados

Being COVID-19 prepared will help you keep yourself and your loved ones SAFE.

This COVID-19 personal guide, will help prepare you to **better** protect yourselves, your loved ones and your communities from exposure to the COVID–19 Virus. It will hopefully address your major concerns and answer your most pressing questions.

The first thing you need to know is that most people will recover from COVID-19.

So, let's focus our energies on preparing for effective prevention and treatment.
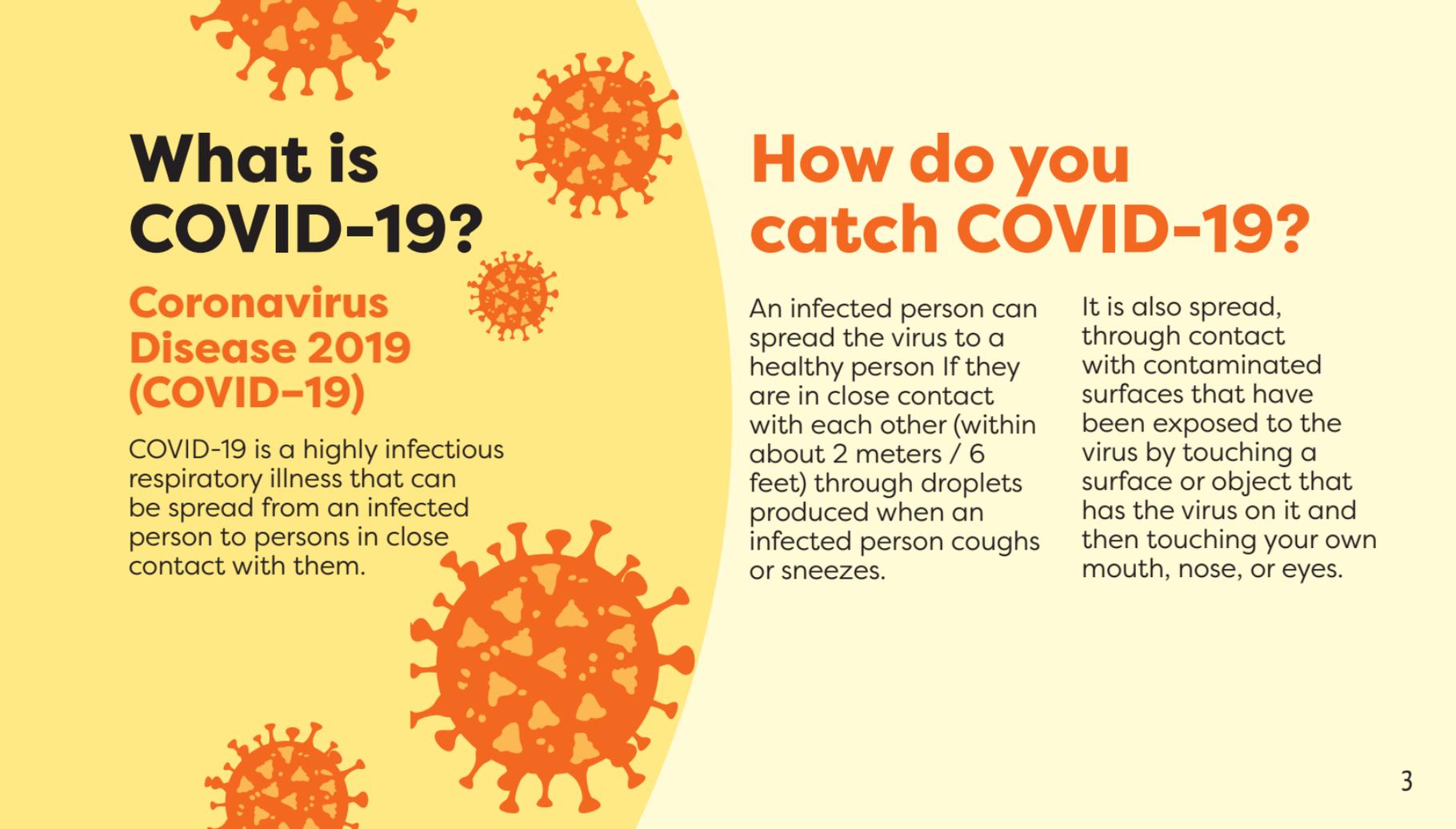
What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is a highly infectious respiratory illness that can be spread from an infected person to persons in close contact with them.

How do you catch COVID-19?

An infected person can spread the virus to a healthy person If they are in close contact with each other (within about 2 meters / 6 feet) through droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It is also spread, through contact with contaminated surfaces that have been exposed to the virus by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes.

Will I die if I catch COVID-19?

The vast majority of persons who contract COVID-19 have mild symptoms and fully recover in 2 weeks.

TOTAL CONFIRMED
181,355

TOTAL RECOVERED
78,085

TOTAL DEATHS
7,118

Source: Live Dashboard - Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) as reported on March 16, 2020.

Who are most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19?

The elderly and persons of any age with underlying health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Should I be worried if I am an elderly person?

It is extra important for elderly persons to reduce their risk of becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus as they are at much greater risk of severe illness from the disease.

Make sure you read on to know what you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy and how you can access care and treatment.

Are our children in danger?

Just over 2% of COVID-19 cases were under 18 years of age so far, and the effects have been generally mild, for these children and young adults.

Do I have COVID-19 if I am coughing or sneezing?

COVID-19 is suspected only if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms such as:

FEVER

DRY COUGH

DIFFICULTY BREATHING

FATIGUE

And, you have been in one of the countries where there is community spread of COVID-19 during the previous 14 days, **or** think you may have come into close contact with a person or persons who have been exposed to or are carrying the disease.

What do I do if I think I have COVID-19?

STAY AWAY FROM OTHERS! <u>Call</u> the COVID-19 hotline at 536-4500 for advice. Or, <u>call</u> your Private Doctor or nearest Polyclinic. (DO NOT VISIT)

If you are suspected to have COVID-19, health officers will visit your home to carry out a clinical assessment and if appropriate, transport you to the testing site where you must remain until the results are returned.

What happens after I am tested for COVID-19?

First remember that most persons who contract COVID-19 recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

If your test results are negative you are returned home and advised to get plenty of rest, and stay hydrated.

If your test results are positive for COVID-19 and your **symptoms are mild,** protocols will be instituted to ensure that you will not be able to infect others. You will be encouraged to get plenty of rest, stay hydrated and your symptoms will be monitored until you recover fully.

If your test results are positive for COVID-19 and your **symptoms are severe,** you will be isolated in a medical facility where supportive treatment may involve medication to reduce fever, fluids to reduce risk of dehydration and supplemental oxygen.

Will persons who recover from COVID-19 be able to infect others?

Persons who have fully recovered from COVID-19 and have been released from isolation do not pose a risk of infection to other people.

What is the difference between Quarantine and isolation?

People are put in **quarantine** when they are not currently sick but have been or may have been exposed to Covid-19 based on travel history and level of risk of exposure to the virus, as determined by health authorities.

They are then tested for COVID-19. This can help stop the spread of the disease.

Self-quarantine or home quarantine means that you are required to isolate yourself in your home, avoiding contact with others for 14 days.

Mandatory quarantine means that you are required to stay in a designated health facility and be monitored for 14 days.

Isolation is complete separation from others when a person is infected. Persons are placed in isolation when they have tested positive. *This can help stop the spread of the disease*.
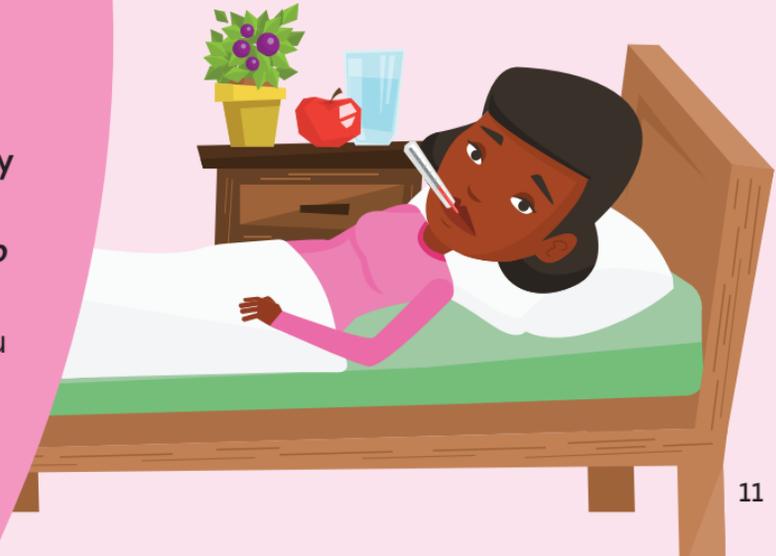
How to Protect Yourself

1. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.

2. **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.

3. **Keep an alcohol-based sanitizer** ready for times when soap and water are not available.

4. **Cover your cough** or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

5. **Stay at home when you are sick.**
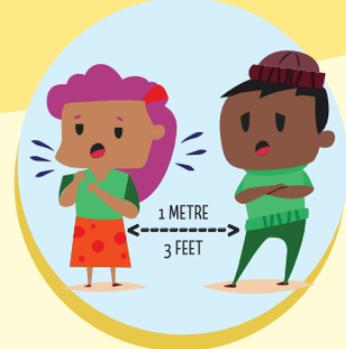
6. **Maintain social distance** of at least 1 metre from anyone coughing or sneezing.

7. **Practice no-touch greetings** instead of handshakes or hugs. Wave, nod or exchange zero touch "namaste" type greetings.

# Should I protect myself by wearing a mask?

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that if you are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 you should wear a mask to protect the others around you. Your caregiver who will be in close contact should also wear a mask.

With the exception of caregivers, it is not necessary for persons who are not sick to wear a face mask.

How long will COVID-19 survive on the surfaces or objects?

The virus can survive on objects from a few hours to a few days on hard surfaces such as plastic and stainless steel for up to 72 hours and on cardboard for up to 24 hours.

Frequently disinfect and sanitise surfaces you touch like desks, telephones, light switches, doorknobs, counter-tops, faucets, sinks and toilets.
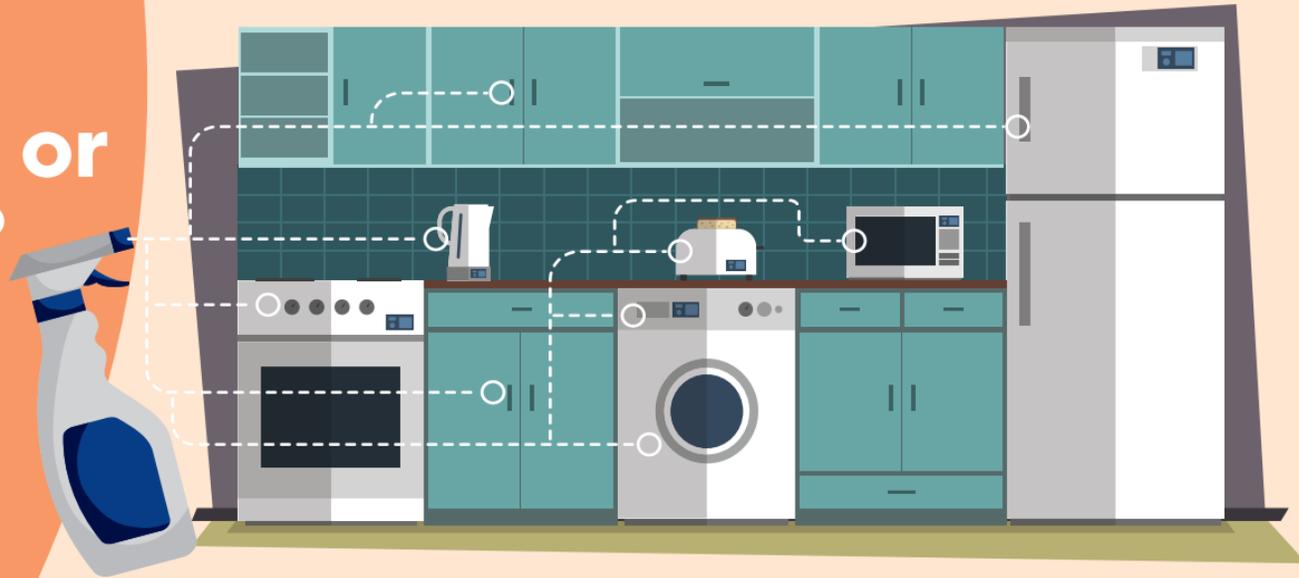
How to Protect Your Loved Ones and Your Community

Don't sneeze or cough into your hands. Use a tissue and throw it away immediately, or sneeze in the inner side of your elbow.

If you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, stay indoors. Don't travel or visit crowded places if you're sick.

Wear a mask if you are sick or if you are taking care of someone who have symptoms associated with COVID-19.

If you feel unwell, do not go to the hospital or your doctor. Call the designated Hotline and follow the advice of health care professionals.

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Remember...

- Maintain good sanitary practices.

- Sanitize surfaces.

- Maintain social distance.

- Exchange zero touch greetings.

- If you feel unwell, do not go to the hospital or your doctor. Call the designated Hotline and follow the advice of health care professionals.

- If you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, stay indoors.

- Do not share or forward malicious or incorrect posts especially if they encourage fear. Only share credible information coming from official sources.

- For any further queries, contact: **536-4500.**

REFERENCES:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6