

## **Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Short Notice for Public**

Coronaviruses are important human and animal pathogens. Common human coronaviruses are responsible for approximately one-third of mild to moderate community-acquired upper respiratory tract infections in adults, like the common cold. This information should not be confused with Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

COVID-19 is the third coronavirus outbreak following the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) outbreaks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. COVID-19 is a type of illness that can mainly affect the respiratory system. Patients with COVID-19 usually complain of fever, cough and feeling tired. When the infection affects the lungs and causes pneumonia, shortness of breath is also observed. In some patients, COVID-19 can lead to respiratory failure, or even death.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus and it was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019. It is assumed that some people probably got the infection from animals in the beginning of the outbreak; but today, it is clear that the disease is spreading from person to person. Close contacts of people who are infected are at greatest risk of exposure.

As of 02.24.2020, 79,360 confirmed cases and 2,619 deaths have been reported globally. Europe is one of the main continents that the disease is observed. According to European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) numbers, 132 patients are seen in Italy, 16 patients in Germany, 13 patients in the United Kingdom, 12 patients in France, 2 patients in Spain, 2 patients in Russia and 1 patient in Belgium, Finland and Sweden.

There is currently neither vaccine nor specific antiviral therapy exist against COVID-19. Therefore, the best way to avoid disease is preventing from the virus. Various measures are taken to prevent the spread of the outbreak. For instance, a number of Serie A football matches were postponed and Venice Carnival was also cancelled in Italy.

Besides these great measures taken by authorities, personal measures also play a crucial role. Washing hands very often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds including wrists, fingernails and in between your fingers is an essential preventive action. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers also a preferable option. Avoiding close contact with people who are sick and avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands are important measures too.

In addition to these preventive measures, maintaining a healthier life style, such as smoking cessation, well-balanced nutrition and regular physical activity, is also important. Furthermore, it is showed that patients with hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases have an increased risk of death from COVID-19. Therefore, following the recommendations of healthcare workers to keep these diseases under control will be beneficial.