CORONAVIRUS
Frequently Asked Questions

MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA

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Question 1
WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS?

The coronavirus has been declared a global health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The coronavirus is a virus, similar to the common cold or flu in many ways. Symptoms can be very mild for some people, but can be far more serious for others.

Question 2:
WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The most common symptoms are:
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Difficulty breathing

Some people may also have aches and pains, a blocked or runny nose, a sore throat or diarrhea in addition to the above.

Question 3:
IS IT DEADLY?

Not everyone who gets the virus becomes very sick.

Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms or feel unwell.
- Most people (about 80%) recover without needing special treatment.
- Around 1 in every 6 people with the virus becomes seriously ill which could be fatal.

Question 4:
WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone who comes into contact with the virus can get it, **BUT** older people and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness.

Question 5:
HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

The virus is infectious and spreads from people who are infected to others through:
- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

Question 6:
CAN I GET IT FROM TOUCHING THINGS?

Yes, sometimes a sick person's saliva can get onto objects like:
- Their hands
- Doorknobs
- Pens
- Digital devises like cell phones and laptops
- Food and utensils
- Stair railings

Don't touch your face, mouth, nose or eyes without washing your hands first.

Question 7:
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE THE VIRUS?

People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should:
- speak to your healthcare practitioner
- share your recent travel history
- avoid travel
- avoid contact with others
- tell your employer

Question 8:

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS FROM GETTING SICK?

The best way to protect yourself is to regularly wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Other preventative measures include:

- Avoiding close contact with anyone who has fever and cough. Avoid close contact with other people if you are coughing or have a fever.
- Covering your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Only eating well-cooked food, especially meat and eggs.
- Never spitting in public.
- Getting your flu vaccination.

Question 9:

IS THERE A VACCINE OR MEDICINE TO STOP THE VIRUS?

At the moment there is no medicine available to prevent or treat the virus. However, conventional medicines can treat the symptoms, helping to comfort those who are infected while their immune systems fight the virus.

Question 10:

CAN THE FLU VACCINE PREVENT ME FROM GETTING THE CORONAVIRUS?

No, but by getting the flu vaccine, you reduce your chances of getting the flu which means your immune system won't be diminished and if you get sick with flu symptoms, your healthcare practitioner will know to test you for the coronavirus.

Question 11:

SHOULD I WEAR A FACE MASK?

Wear a disposable face mask if you are ill with coronavirus symptoms or looking after someone with the virus.

Question 12:

ARE PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS AT GREATER RISK?

Although we don't know everything yet, older people, those with other health conditions and people with compromised immune systems are more likely to be affected more harshly than others.

But, HIV patients who receive stable anti-retroviral therapy have normal CD4 counts which decreases their risk of seriously falling ill.

Protect yourself by:

- Knowing your status
- Taking your ARVs
- Following good physical and respiratory hygiene basics

Question 13:

DOES TAKING A HOT BATH PREVENT PEOPLE FROM GETTING THE CORONAVIRUS?

Taking a hot bath will not prevent you from getting the virus. Your normal body temperature is usually between 36.5C to 37C, regardless of the temperature of your bath.

Taking a hot bath with extremely hot water can be harmful to you because it can burn you.

Question 14:

CAN I GET THE CORONAVIRUS FROM MOSQUITOS?

The coronavirus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets of mucus or spit generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Question 15:

CAN I GET THE CORONAVIRUS FROM PETS?

There is no evidence that shows that pets such as dogs or cats can be infected by the virus. But, it's always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after you've touched your pets.

Question 16:

DO ANTIBIOTICS EFFECTIVELY TREAT THE CORONAVIRUS?

No, antibiotics don't work against viruses, only bacteria.