



Leading Behaviour Change and Social Good

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic – A Statement from the AASM

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is causing major concern globally. The Government of the Commonwealth of Australia has recently announced a new \$30 million-dollar public health [campaign](#) featuring a mixture of TV, radio & print advertisements & posters at bus stops aimed at better informing Australians about COVID-19.

The [Australian Association of Social Marketing](#) (AASM) is Australia's peak body leading behaviour change & social good. The AASM is a voluntary association representing members using social marketing for behaviour & social change across the country. Our membership consists of policymakers, behaviour change programme practitioners, public health professionals, public sector organisations, businesses, & academic researchers. Together, the AASM represents considerable collective knowledge & expertise on successful behaviour & social change approaches.

Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, & now the launch of a new public health campaign, the AASM advocates that efforts to tackle the problem are based on scientific evidence regarding effective approaches to behaviour change.

The following recommendations from the AASM on tackling the problem are based on our collective knowledge & experience.

The AASM advocates a strategic & systems wide behaviour change response to the pandemic that:

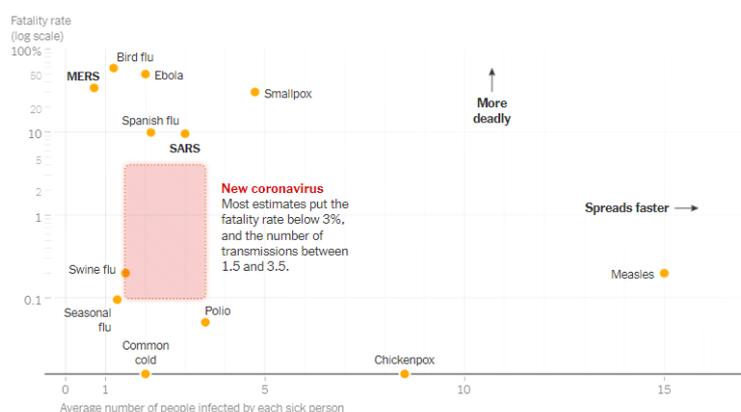
- Incorporates ethical, participatory, & mutual values;
- Employs cross-sector, reflexive, strategic & systems thinking perspectives;
- Involves strong stakeholder engagement & partnerships;
- Adopts careful planning, monitoring & evaluation;
- Draws on research, behavioural theory & insight;
- Adopts a segmented, targeted & appropriately positioned approach;
- Utilises a broad, multi-level & multi-faceted range of intervention strategies, tools & tactics working at the macro, meso, & micro levels

Sources: [AASM, 2020](#); [French & Gordon, 2019](#)

The AASM recommends the following actions at the macro, meso & micro level to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic:

### Macro & meso level measures (for Government, key authorities & organisations)

- A strategic coalition of stakeholders should be formed across relevant sectors including public health, education, businesses, transportation, & public venues
- Governments need to clearly establish who is acting as the trusted authority
- Strategic leadership, good planning & use of rigorous research insight, & effective & consistent communication & action is required at all levels
- Assume COVID-19 will spread aggressively & test & act accordingly: countries that have acted quickly, strategically & [successfully](#) to deliver comprehensive testing, care & intervention have significantly [lower mortality rates](#)
- Inject significant investment into the public health system to fund testing, treatment, recovery, & staff capacity
- Develop clear plans & process for easily accessible testing, care, treatment, recovery, & reintegration into social life of those who get sick
- Media should be held accountable to report the facts & help efforts to tackle the problem - not scaremonger or sensationalise
- Instruct as many people as possible to work from home
- Government, business & organisations should ensure that handwashing facilities (soap, hot water, hand sanitiser) are widely available for people to use
- Enforce physical distancing, close public institutions (e.g. Universities schools, workplaces), ban large public gatherings - as much as is possible
- Work with retailers to ensure basic household necessities can still be purchased & control panic buying & stockpiling & ensure at risk groups can purchase easily
- Develop contingency plans for organisations to still function using technology & home working as much as possible
- Develop & deliver effective strategic social marketing providing information about COVID-19 including [spread](#), [symptoms](#), recommend behaviours & the risk level to address pandemic [fear & panic](#) (see also the diagram below)



Source: [Sheikh et al., 2020](#)

- Segment & target populations focusing on protecting [at-risk groups](#): people who are older (60+), immunosuppressed, have underlying chronic health conditions (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension, cancer)
- Deliver economic stimulus to protect/subsidise workers who cannot work from home but need to self-isolate, & support people, communities, business & the economy through the pandemic

## Meso & micro level measures (for members of the public & communities)

Develop & deliver clear, consistent & evidence-based behaviour change messages to the public to encourage desired behaviours & avoid [panic](#) – these include:

### Prevention measures

- Wash your hands with hot water & soap for at least 20 seconds thoroughly & often - if soap & water are not readily available use hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching other people (e.g. shaking hands) or touching commonly handled items such as door handles
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, & mouth with unwashed hands as much as possible
- Practice physical distancing: avoid public gatherings as much as possible & avoid being in close proximity (within 1.5 metres) to other people
- Avoid close contact with people (within 1.5 metres) who are sick
- Clean & disinfect all high-touch surfaces every day: this includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets & sinks
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap & water prior to disinfection
- If you are able to work from home as much as is possible
- If you manage, work for or are in the following organisations or locations please consult resources made available by the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) or the US [Center for Disease Control & Prevention](#) -schools & childcare, TAFE & Universities, community & faith based organisations, healthcare settings, homelessness shelters, large public gatherings, healthcare settings, emergency services/first responders
- Avoid all but essential travel, especially overseas & to at-risk areas
- If you are not sick, there is no need to wear a facemask as they are less effective at preventing you from getting sick but are more effective at preventing those who are sick from infecting others
- Try not to panic especially if you are not a member of an at-risk group. Although still fluctuating the latest estimates are of a mortality rate from COVID-19 of at most [3.4% but perhaps even 1% or lower](#).
- About [80%](#) of people with COVID-19 recover without specialist treatment & only [one in six](#) gets seriously ill & develops breathing difficulties.
- Do not panic buy – there is no need to stockpile months of supplies (especially toilet roll, soap, hand sanitiser, face masks, basic food staples)
- Remember that potentially vulnerable people (e.g. older people or immunosuppressed) may be in greater need of essential supplies
- Be kind & caring towards other people & do not stigmatise or abuse anyone based on race or ethnicity, if they are sick or have recently been in close proximity to someone who is sick, if they are in an at-risk group, or if they have recently travelled to countries that have been heavily hit by COVID-19
- Focus on your protecting your mental health & that of others – [see here](#)
- Keep your spirits up and be positive as much as possible
- You can keep up to date with the current situation and case numbers [here](#) & [here](#)

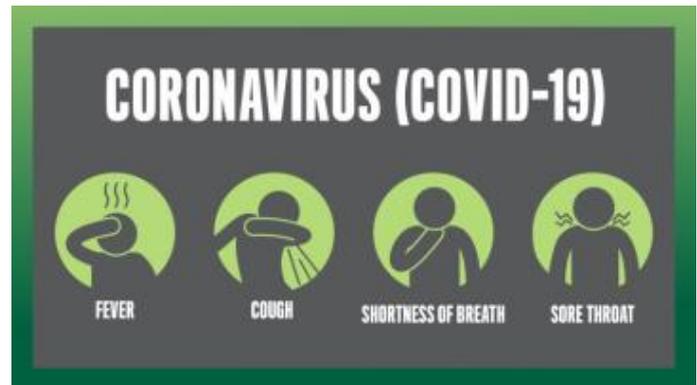
Sources: [CDC 2020a,b](#) [WHO 2020a,b,c,d,e](#) [Roser et al 2020](#); [Jones et al 2010](#), [Australian Government Department of Health 2020a,b](#)

## What to do if you get sick

- Stay home & self-isolate & follow the [guidelines](#) for at least 2 weeks if you have returned from travel overseas, or been in close contact with a known COVID-19 case or someone who has recently travelled to countries that have been heavily hit by COVID-19 (currently China, South Korea, Iran & Italy) & get tested if you fit the criteria
- Stay home, self-isolate & follow the [guidelines](#) if you develop flu-like symptoms & get tested if you fit the criteria
- Consult the diagrams below if you think you may have Coronavirus (COVID-19).

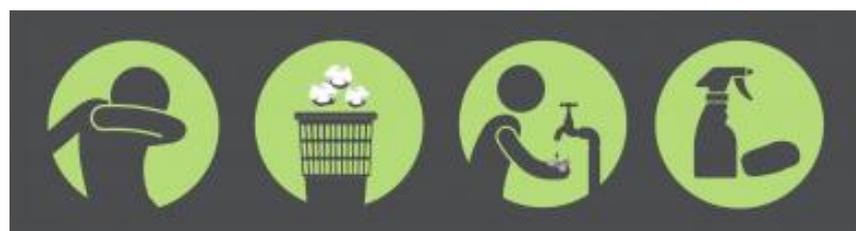
Symptoms	Coronavirus Symptoms range from mild to severe	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms
 Fever	Common	Rare	Common
 Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 Cough	Common* (usually dry)	Mild	Common* (usually dry)
 Sneezing	No	Common	No
 Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Sources: WHO, 2020e & [CDC 2020c](#), [Australian Government Department of Health 2020a](#)

- During self-isolation you should stay home & restrict activities outside your home except for getting medical care
- Avoid public areas including work, school, university, or public spaces
- Avoid public transport, aeroplanes, ride-sharing cars, or taxis
- Separate yourself from other people in your home – you should stay in a specific room & use a separate bathroom if available. If you have a pet arrange for someone to care for them while you are sick
- Call ahead before visiting a doctor or medical appointment & tell them that you have (or may have) COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider take steps to prevent other people from getting infected.
- Wash your hands with hot water & soap for at least 20 seconds thoroughly & often - if soap & water are not readily available use hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol thoroughly
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, & mouth with unwashed hands as much as possible
- Cover your mouth & nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow – see image below:



Source: [Australian Government Department of Health 2020a.c](#)

### What to do if you get sick (continued)

- Throw used tissues in the rubbish straight away
- Immediately wash your hands with soap & hot water for at least 20 seconds – if soap & water are not readily available use hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Wear a facemask only if you are sick & when you are around other people (e.g. sharing a room or a vehicle, or entering a medical facility)
- Do not share personal household items including dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels or bedding with other people or pets in your home
- Wash thoroughly after using any of these personal household items
- Clean & disinfect all high-touch surfaces every day -- this includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, & sinks
- Clean & disinfect areas with bodily fluids that may have blood, mucus, stools or body fluids on them
- Monitor your symptoms & seek medical attention if your illness is worsening – for example you have difficulty breathing
- Call your doctor before seeking care & tell them you have or are being evaluated for COVID-19
- Ask your healthcare provider to alert the relevant Government health department about your illness
- Stay at home until instructed to leave – patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain home under isolation procedures until the risk of secondary transmission to others is believed to be low
- Talk to your healthcare provider regarding any decision to discontinue home isolation as this should be done on a case by case basis & in consultation with healthcare providers & relevant Government health departments
- Keep your [spirits up](#) and be positive as much as possible
- Follow a clear plan for reintegration into social life once you recover

Sources: [CDC 2020 c,d](#); WHO 2020**b,c,e**; [Australian Government Department of Health 2020a](#)

## At-risk people

- COVID-19 has a greater impact on the health of and mortality rate among [at-risk groups](#): older people (aged 60+), immunosuppressed people, people with underlying chronic health conditions (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension, cancer)
- People with other health conditions or who have disabilities may also be [significantly affected](#) during the pandemic due to problems in accessing carers, care, support, various health services, medicines, food & other essential resources
- Many of us may be in these at-risk groups ourselves
- Or we all know and love people that are in at-risk groups as they are our grandparents, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives, husbands, partners, friends, and colleagues.
- So it is our job as a community & society to work together & protect them
- There is [information](#), [resources](#) & updates available to help support people in at-risk groups
- If you are in an at-risk group consider going into self-isolation at home as much as possible (e.g. home working, avoiding public transport, gatherings & spaces, practice physical distancing, arrange home deliveries of basic necessities)
- If you know someone in an at-risk group encourage them to go into self-isolation as much as possible (e.g. home working, avoiding public transport, gatherings & spaces, practice physical distancing, arrange home deliveries of basic necessities)
- As always practicing good handwashing is important whether you are in an at-risk group, or around people in an at-risk group.
- Restrict your close physical interaction with at-risk people – practicing physical distancing (stay a minimum of 1.5 metres away)
- Keep in regular contact with your at-risk loved ones through texts, messages, phone calls & video calls
- Support at-risk people by offering to do their shopping or checking up on them often – while practicing physical distancing
- Do not label or stigmatise people in at-risk groups
- Read/share [information](#) about COVID-19 & good behavioural practices to deal with it with if you are in or know someone in an at-risk group
- There is no currently known increased risk relating to COVID-19 to pregnant women or babies – [see here](#)

Sources: [CDC 2020 c,d](#); [WHO 2020a](#); [CRE-DH 2020](#); [Australian Government Department of Health 2020a,d](#)

**Suggested Citation:** Australian Association of Social Marketing. (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic – A Statement from the AASM. Toorak: Australian Association of Social Marketing.

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You can contact the AASM on:

Email: [aasmaus@gmail](mailto:aasmaus@gmail)

Twitter: [@AASM\\_Aus](https://twitter.com/AASM_Aus)

Website: [www.aasm.org.au](http://www.aasm.org.au)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com > company > australian-association-of-social-marketing](https://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-association-of-social-marketing)

AASM President [Ross Gordon](#): email [ross.gordon1@qut.edu.au](mailto:ross.gordon1@qut.edu.au) tel 07 3138 4183