



GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS IN MALAWI ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF **COVID-19**

In light of the COVID-19 disease that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared as a pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), would like to provide guidelines to all education institutions in the country on how to manage the disease during school time as well as on holidays.

All institutions are requested to follow the guidelines prescribed below for the prevention and management of the Coronavirus for the protection against infection of learners, students, staff and the general public.

Malawi has so far not registered any case of COVID-19. However, it is advisable that as a nation we remain vigilant against infection of the disease.

INTRODUCTION

● **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.

● WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR COVID-19?

Currently there is no available vaccine for 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.

● WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

More lessons are being drawn everyday about how COVID-19 affects people. It must be pointed out that everyone is at risk. However, 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, lessons are still drawn about how it affects children. 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.

● WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. However, some patients have muscle aches, runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, and or diarrhoea. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment and others become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.

People with cough, difficulty breathing, and or fever should seek medical attention urgently.



SPECIFIC GUIDELINES AND CHECKLIST

FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, STAFF, PARENTS,
GUARDIANS, LEARNERS AND STUDENTS



- 1** Schools are not allowed to receive visitors coming from outside the country unless approved by the Ministry.
- 2** Promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviours.
- 3** Ensure soap and safe water is available at age-appropriate hand washing stations.
- 4** Encourage frequent and thorough hand washing (at least for 20 seconds).
- 5** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- 6** Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets or latrines for girls and boys.
- 7** 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.)
- 8** Increase air flow and ventilation (open windows, use air conditioning where available, etc.)
- 9** Post signs encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

-
- 10 Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely.
 - 11 Encourage students and staff to stay home if sick.
 - 12 Monitor absenteeism.
 - 13 Plan for digital and distance learning where possible.
 - 14 Be prepared to temporarily dismiss or close schools and cancel events on advisory.
 - 15 Teachers should check on every learner first thing in the morning before lessons begin so that if one is found with strange signs (difficulty in breathing, cold/cough, fever or flu) his/her parents can immediately be informed to come and pick their child.)
 - 16 Parents and guardians are encouraged to keep checking their children/wards and make sure that if they observe such signs on him/her, you do not send that child to school.
 - 17 Make sure children including grown ups drink water frequently so that the throat is not left dry and avoid fluids with ice.
 - 18 Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another.



-
- 19 Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (though parent-teacher committees, etc.)
 - 20 Inform learners not to stigmatize their peers or tease anyone about being sick; they should always remember that the virus doesn't follow geographical boundaries, ethnicities, age or ability or gender.
 - 21 Tell learners to inform their parents, other family members, or a caregiver if they feel sick, and they should ask to stay home.
 - 22 Enlighten learners to focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands frequently.
 - 23 Have children sit further apart from one another, they should keep enough space to not touch their friends.
 - 24 Contact sports and other activities should be greatly discouraged.
 - 25 Introduce the concept of social distancing (standing further away from friends, avoiding large crowds, not touching people if you don't need to, etc.)
 - 26 Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, by putting coloured water in a spray bottle and spraying over a piece of white paper. Observe how far the droplets travel.
 - 27 Incorporate relevant health education into other subjects.
 - 28 Get information only from official and trusted sources.

PROPER **HAND WASHING** PROCESS



Wet hands
with safe
running water

STEP 1

Apply enough
soap to cover
wet hands

STEP 2

Scrub all
surfaces of
the hands
– including
backs of
hands,
between
fingers and
under nails –
for at least 20
seconds

STEP 3

Rinse
thoroughly
with running
water

STEP 4

Dry hands
with a clean,
dry cloth,
single-use
towel or
hand drier, if
available

STEP 5

The Ministry is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all learners and wards. These measures are not intended to raise alarm, but are implemented as a precaution even though there are no reported cases of Coronavirus in Malawi at present.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology encourages all parents and guardians to collaborate with the Ministry by following the news and implementing good hygiene and preventative measures as advised by Health Authorities.



Justin Adack K. Saidi

Secretary for Education, Science and Technology

17th March, 2020



ALL IT TAKES TO DEFEAT CORONAVIRUS!

1. Protect yourselves.
2. Protect your loved ones.
3. Protect your community.