Novel coronavirus

Dear Member

While health organisations around the world are fighting the spread of the coronavirus, we would advise you to take note of the basic facts surrounding this new virus.

Where and when did it all begin?

On 31 December 2019, China alerted the World Health Organization of several patients with flu-like symptoms in a city called Wuhan, the capital of Central China's Hubei province. Initial assessments of these patients ruled out known flu-like viruses, including bird flu, seasonal flu, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

After these initial patients were diagnosed, they were placed under quarantine. The suspected source of the outbreak was identified as a busy seafood market in the city. A few days later Chinese authorities identified the virus, a coronavirus, which is part of a family of viruses that includes the common cold, SARS and MERS. The new virus was named 2019-nCoV.

Globally, as of 31 January 2020, 9 800 cases had been detected with over 360 deaths across 22 countries. By 29 January 2020, China had confirmed 132 deaths and a total of 5 974 cases of coronavirus infections. Globally there were 1 320 confirmed cases, spread via air travellers. The World Health Organization has since declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

What is a coronavirus?

The coronavirus was first discovered in the 1960s and its name comes from its crown or halo-like shape. Its danger lies in its ability to adapt. This means it can easily spread between and infect different species. While some coronaviruses can cause the common cold, others can develop into more serious illnesses that lead to difficulty breathing, pneumonia and death.

Where did it come from?

Scientists have confirmed that the coronavirus, like around 70% of new human infectious agents, was transmitted from an animal. But they are still investigating exactly what this creature might be.

What are the symptoms?

Patients who have contracted the virus have experienced fever, shortness of breath and coughing. The virus can also cause bronchitis and pneumonia, an infection that inflames the air sacs in the lungs and can cause them to fill with fluid.

Who is at risk?

Those most at risk of contracting the coronavirus include those with cardiopulmonary (heart-lung) disease, people with weakened immune systems, infants and older adults.

Protecting yourself and others

There is currently no known treatment for coronavirus and, to date, no vaccine. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. In addition, it is always important to follow good hand and respiratory hygiene, including:
- regularly cleaning your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs
- covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing
- avoiding contact with anyone who has flu-like symptoms
- avoiding unprotected contact with live wild or farm animals.

Most importantly, if you were in China in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, coughing or have difficulty breathing, you should:
- seek medical care immediately; before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms
- avoid contact with others.

What you are covered for:

In- and out-of-hospital benefits are covered as per your benefit plan. Should you have any questions or wish to confirm your benefits, please do not hesitate to contact us on the following numbers:
Link, **Select** and **Prime Plan members** can call **0800 450 010** and **Guardian plan members** can call **0800 110 268**.

As a Transmed Medical Fund member, you can call a doctor for free via **Hello Doctor** to discuss any worrying symptoms you may have or for more information. To talk to a doctor, you need to use one of the following Hello Doctor platforms:

Website: www.hellodoctor.co.za
You can login to your personal profile on the Hello Doctor website using your access details and request a call back, or simply just send a text message to a doctor.

App: Search for "Hello Doctor" in your mobile phone's App Store and download the app.
You can sign in using your access details and request a call back, or send a text message to a doctor. You can also access the Hello Doctor Symptom checker on the App as well as subscribe to a Health Tip which will be delivered daily through your app.

USSD: Dial *120*1019#
If you dial this number from your mobile phone you can then follow the menu prompts to request a call back from a doctor or send a text message to the number that they provide. Please note that we need to have your updated mobile number in our database for you to access the services using USSD. It is important to note that you need to log your text message through dialling this USSD number first for your message to reach the Hello Doctor platform.

Kind regards
Transmed Medical Fund

Protecting yourself and others from getting sick

Wash your hands:
- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are visibly dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste.

Practise good hygiene
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue.
- Throw tissues into a closed bin immediately after use.
- Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick.

Practise food safety
Even in areas experiencing outbreaks, meat products can be safely consumed if these items are cooked thoroughly and properly handled during food preparation.

References:
https://www.who.int/
https://www.hellodoctor.co.za/