



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

PROTECT YOURSELF, PROTECT OTHERS FROM CORONAVIRUS

Media Update #1: MHMS Preparations for, and response to, COVID-19 (18/03/2020)

Surveillance & monitoring

- There are two people being investigated for possible COVID-19 infection. Blood samples have been taken, and these people are in isolation as we await test results. These individuals are being checked daily and have been assessed by Public Health Surveillance team in appropriate isolation.
- An isolation ward at National Referral Hospital is being set up for confirmed or suspected cases. WHO is assisting with equipment, while the New Zealand Government is supporting the cost of refurbishment.
- A triage site (where patients are first assessed for treatment) at NRH is now operating and has already been used to assess current suspected cases.
- The quarantine facility in Honiara is now operating with nurses and security officers on site. This is for people who are **not sick**, but who are assessed as being at risk of having been exposed to the virus.
- Surveillance officers are in regular communication with those in home-based quarantine to check for symptoms of COVID so that cases can be identified early.

Travel

- The Solomon Islands Government issued a new travel advisory (No.3) on March 13, effective from March 14. All travelers and crew travelling from “affected” countries will be subject to risk-based assessment by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) and may be subject to quarantine restrictions for up to 14 days or monitored by health authorities for 14 days or denied entry. They must report to Health authorities if they become unwell and display symptoms of the COVID-19 during 14 days after arrival and should self-isolate.
- Any person found to be providing false information to the Solomon Islands Government will be prosecuted under the relevant laws of Solomon Islands and this may include imprisonment or deportation.
- There is a “No Travel” restriction upon all members of Parliament and Government Officials to restricted countries. Citizens and residents of the Solomon Islands are advised to avoid and/or defer nonessential travel - including for conferences and training - to restricted countries. Travel advisories will change at the situation changes: be sure to check these sites before travel. www.visitsolomons.com.sb ; www.customs.gov.sb ; www.ndmo.gov.sb .



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Public information campaign

The official MHMS face book page is set up and will be administered by Ministry of Health officials: <https://www.facebook.com/officialmhmsi/>

- This page is mainly for those accessing FB and social media networks to access accurate information. This also aims to reduce rumors via this medium.
- The “Protect yourself, protect others from Coronavirus” public information campaign is well under way. We are keeping the public updated on measures they can take to protect their health through daily radio programming on SIBC, regular news media updates, information sessions for the business, education, churches, government and non-government sectors, and the distribution of tens of thousands of posters and information leaflets to communities. Provincial health teams in Choiseul and Western Province, were also briefed last week, with other provinces to follow this week. Volunteers from Red Cross will be trained to assist Provincial Health Promotion teams with awareness at community level.
- Thanks to the support of B-Mobile and Telekom, MHMS can now quickly reach people all over the country with text messaging.
- People with access to the internet, should visit the **Learning about Coronavirus** section on the government portal at www.solomons.gov.sb for information and guidance. The Ministry is also working on setting up a Facebook page.

Take action to protect yourself and others

In the meantime, MHMS urges the public to continue to practice health hygiene behaviors. COVID-19 is spread when someone with the virus coughs, sneezes or breathes, sending infected droplets over others and onto surfaces.

- Cover mouth and nose when cough and sneezing
- Wash your hands often with water and soap or use hand sanitizer
- If you are sick, keep your distance from other people – at least 1 metre away.
- Avoid overcrowded areas and keep your distance when standing around betel nut stalls and playing Ludo games.
- Avoid sharing of cigarettes
- Avoid spitting

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MEDIA: for more information contact MHMS Media Officer Dian Maggie Row on email, drow@moh.gov.sb or phone: 25205.