



Republic of Zambia
Ministry of Health

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

MESSAGE GUIDE FOR RESPONDERS IN ZAMBIA



April 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

On 31st December 2019, the Government of China reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The World Health Organization (WHO) identified the disease as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). WHO declared the disease as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and later as a Pandemic. To defeat the virus, WHO urges countries to find, isolate, test, treat and trace contacts.

The Ministry of Health is working through the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPPI), with support from partners to respond to this public health emergency through various interventions which have been put in place in line with the National Multi-sectoral Contingency Plan. Risk communication is one of the interventions being implemented. It is aimed at providing timely, relevant and culturally appropriate information to different target audiences, using various trusted communication channels in order to promote preventive behaviours and save lives. Timely information also serves to build trust in the communities.

Due to the increasing in the number of cases of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Zambia, there is an urgent need for practical messaging and engagement of individuals, families and key stakeholders to support all response efforts aimed at prevention, finding cases and tracing contacts including isolating, testing and treating cases.

To stop the spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), messages are needed to inform all stakeholders, individuals, families and communities in clear, practical, and culturally relevant terms about:

- What to do to prevent the spread of the disease;
- How to get help;
- How to access available services and
- How to stop stigma.

The call centres have been activated at the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) and at the Zambia National Public Health Institute for the public to ask questions, seek help or report any suspected cases of COVID-19. The numbers to call are 0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 and the Toll Free line: 909

The messages in this document are based on technical guidance from WHO and the U.S. Centres for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) based on what is so far known about COVID-19. The messages have been adapted for the Zambian context by the MOH/ZNPPI/WHO/UNICEF/USAID and other partners. These messages will be updated as the situation evolves while new messages will be added as need arises.

1. PURPOSE OF THE MESSAGE GUIDE

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a new disease. It has been associated with an **infodemic**, which is to say it is characterized by mass information, misconceptions, rumours, myths and half-truths. Stigma is also widespread and can cause those affected

to hide and not reach out for care. As a result, the danger of transmission continues. There is a critical need to responsively address misperceptions, rumors, and fear. Feedback from the community and social media has shown that guidance is needed on what to do to collectively combat this disease in Zambia and protect life.

The purpose is to guide all stakeholders involved in designing activities to raise awareness, mobilize communities and promote safe behaviours. It therefore contains a reference of accurate, standardized information in simple language.

2. INTENDED USERS

The information in this guide is intended for use by all partners and stakeholders involved in communication and engaging communities in the response to COVID-19. These include government ministries and departments, academic and research institutions, UN agencies, private sector, local and international NGOs, FBOs, CBOS, service clubs, traditional leaders, professional associations, individuals, the media and other organizations involved in the response.

3. APPROVAL OF COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

In order to ensure that consistent messages are provided to the general population, and to avoid conflicting messages, all materials intended for public dissemination should be submitted to the Ministry of Health for review and approval. In order to facilitate an efficient approval process, all materials and messages should be consistent with guidance provided in this document.

4. MESSAGE TOPICS

This document contains messages on the following key areas:

- a) Understanding COVID -19 (what it is, signs and symptoms, how it spreads, who is at risk).
- b) Prevention methods (how to minimize the spread of COVID-19).
- c) Vaccination.
- d) The use of a face mask.
- e) Self-quarantine.
- f) Treatment and available services.
- g) Contacts and contact tracing.
- h) Home care.
- i) Physical / Social distancing.
- j) Travel.
- k) Pregnancy.
- l) Breastfeeding.
- m) People with chronic illnesses and the elderly.
- n) Children.
- o) Information about handling the dead and safe burial.
- p) Surviving COVID-19.

- q) Dealing with stigma.
- r) Guidelines for Markets.

a. Understanding COVID-19

What is Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)?

- **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)** is a respiratory disease caused by a new Coronavirus. The virus causes a respiratory illness, similar to a common cold or the flu, and in severe cases leads to pneumonia, kidney failure and can result in death.
- The virus was identified in China in 2019 and has since spread to other countries including Zambia.

What is the incubation period for COVID-19?

- The “incubation period” means the time between being infected or “catching” the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. The incubation period for COVID-19 ranges from 1-14 days.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Patients who are infected with the virus show a wide range of symptoms. In most cases the disease is mild. However, in some cases the disease is severe and can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure or death.
- The common signs and symptoms include:-
 - Cough
 - Fever
 - Sore throat
 - Headache
 - Tiredness
 - Diarrhoea
 - Shortness of breath
 - Difficulty breathing

How does the disease spread?

COVID -19 is spread from one person to another. The main ways in which the disease is transmitted include:

- Being in close contact with a person who is infected with the virus.
- Breathing in small droplets, which come from the nose or mouth, when a person with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes.
- Touching an object or surface contaminated with the virus and then touching the eye, mouth or nose.
- Not following carefully infection control measures when caring for an infected patient.

Who is at risk of getting the disease?

- Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19- the young, adults and the elderly.
- COVID-19 knows no age, sex, tribe, colour, race, religion or country, everyone is at risk.
- The COVID-19 virus can be transmitted anywhere, regardless of climate. This includes, areas with hot and humid weather. Adopt prevention measures if you live in, or travel to a country or area reporting COVID-19.
- Anybody in close contact with a person infected with the virus (e.g. workmates, family members or friends caring for the sick) are at risk for getting the disease.
- Older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease, or diabetes) are at a higher risk for serious COVID-19 complications.
- Persons who have been in contact with someone who is infected, is sick or has died as a result of COVID -19 are at greater risk for getting the disease.
- Health care workers, who are often in contact with sick patients, are at increased risk for contracting the disease.
- Airline workers and those working at border posts.

b. Prevention Methods and Minimizing COVID-19 Transmission

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Maintain a physical distance of more than 1-2 metres from anyone at all times.
- Avoid close contact with anyone showing signs and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as coughing and/or sneezing. Maintain more than 1-2 meters distance away from others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or with tissue. Throw away tissue into a closed bin or designated place immediately after use and wash your hands.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909**
- Avoid physical contact, such as a hug or handshake, when greeting people. Instead, greet people with a wave, nod or bow.
- Health care workers must practice standard infection prevention measures such as washing hands and putting on personal protective equipment at all recommended times.
- Avoid all non-essential travel to countries or areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Avoid non-essential travel to areas where there is high transmission of the disease.
- Even if you are in an area in the country where COVID-19 is not yet spreading it is important to follow preventive measures for your safety and that of your loved ones.

c. Vaccination

- There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to follow the recommended prevention measures.

d. The use of a face mask

Wearing a face mask is important for everyone to prevent spread of the coronavirus as well as reduce the risk of contracting the virus. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, therefore masks should be used wisely.

Disposable masks should be used only once. Cloth masks however are affordable and can be re-used after thoroughly washing them with detergent. Make sure to iron the cloth masks after washing them.

Follow the guidelines below for proper use of face masks:

- Wear a face mask every time you leave home and go out in public, including when using public transport
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory symptoms (coughing or sneezing) or have suspected COVID-19 infection
- Wear a mask if you are caring for someone who has symptoms suspected to be COVID-19
- To be most effective facemasks should be used in combination with other infection prevention measures such as frequent hand-washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently wash your hands, cover your cough with the flexed elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 1 or 2 metres from people who are coughing or sneezing.
- If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly in a bin or a trash can.

e. How to use a face mask

i. **Medical mask**

- Before putting on a mask, clean hands by washing them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitise.
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp.
- Remember that a disposable face mask can only be used once.
- Avoid wearing a facemask around your necks. This can contaminate the mask.
- To remove the mask: wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask); discard immediately in a

closed bin or designated space Following this, wash your hands again with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser

ii. Cloth or Chitenge mask

- Before putting on a mask, clean hands by washing them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid wearing a facemask around your necks. This can contaminate the mask.
- To remove the mask: wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask).
- Wash the mask thoroughly with water and soap daily after use.

f. Self-Quarantine

Self-Quarantine is separation a person from others when it is reasonably believed that he or she has *been exposed* to COVID-19, although they are not showing any symptoms in order to prevent the possible spread of the disease.

Any person who has travelled from a country where COVID-19 is spreading must self-quarantine.

Any person who has been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-quarantine.

What to do when in self-quarantine

Stay home except if you need to go and get medical care:

- You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Do not use public transportation such as buses or taxis.

Separate yourself from other people in your home:

- A person on self-quarantine should be confined to a specific room and away from other people in your home and use a separate bathroom, if available.
- Minimize any interaction with the people in your home if you are on self-quarantine.

Avoid sharing personal household items:

- Any person on self-quarantine should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in their home.

- All household items used by a person on self-quarantine should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean your hands and maintain personal hygiene

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wear a facemask whenever you come into contact with other people.
- People who live with a person on self-quarantine should wear a facemask when they enter his or her room.

Monitor yourself for any symptoms of COVID-19

- Maintain contact with your nearest health care provider or the local COVID -19 Rapid Response team and adhere to the guidance provided.
- If you develop symptoms immediately call **toll free number 909** or the following numbers: **0953 898941; 0964 6387260974 493553**.
- When you are taken to the health facility by the Rapid Response Team, wear a facemask.

When to discontinue self-quarantine

- Patients with confirmed infection should remain under home quarantine for a period of 14 to 21 days from the date of contact with a confirmed case or the date of entry into Zambia from a country reporting local transmission of COVID-19.
- The local Rapid Response Team or District Health Office will provide clearance to discontinue home quarantine.

g. Home Isolation

Home isolation means separating a person from other people who are not infected when it is known or reasonably believed that he or she is infected with COVID-19 and could potentially infect others in order to prevent spread of the disease.

Home isolation applies to the following:-

- People who are confirmed to have COVID-19, but do not need to be admitted to hospital because they have mild symptoms and do not have other underlying chronic medical conditions;
- People who are in home quarantine and who develop symptoms e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, diarrhoea and fatigue, etc.
- Anyone with symptoms of respiratory infection (similar to cold or flu symptoms)

What to do while in home isolation

- Home isolation means you must stay at home.
- You must not visit shops or other public places.
- Do not use public transport or taxis. Where possible, stay, eat, and sleep in a separate room from the others you live with and use a separate bathroom and toilet if possible.
- If you develop symptoms immediately call **toll free number 909** or the following numbers: **0953 898941; 0964 6387260974 493553**.
- While in isolation, limit the number of people taking care of you (ideally just one person).
- Your caretaker should wear a medical mask and gloves when in the same room as you.
- Practice good hand hygiene with frequent hand washing with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes with unclean hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue while coughing/sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your elbow. Throw away used tissues/paper towels immediately after use and then wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces such as bathroom sinks, toilets, door handles and kitchen counters frequently.

h. Treatment and Available Services

- There is no known specific treatment for COVID-19. However, those who are sick are given medical attention to relieve and treat the symptoms they have.
- Wash with soap and water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer on counters, doorknobs, light, switches, or other high touch points.
- Research is going on around the world to find the treatment for COVID -19.
- People with COVID-19 symptoms (Cough, sneezing, fever, headache, tiredness, diarrhoea, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing) should immediately call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909** for assistance to get medical attention. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 to others.

Note: COVID-19) is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.

i. Contacts and Contact Tracing

- **A contact** is any person who has been exposed to a person who is suspected to have COVID-19 or to a person who is suffering from COVID-19 or has died from the disease.
- **Contact tracing** is the identification and follow-up of persons who may have come into contact with an infected person. Contacts are monitored for the maximum incubation period of COVID-19, which is 14 days. If they become ill, they will be quickly isolated and given treatment for symptoms they have.
- Contact tracing is important because it can stop the disease from spreading.
- Contact tracing of **every** contact is essential to control and stop the outbreak.
- If you are a **contact**, cooperate with contact tracers. Do not lie to them. You are being followed to protect yourself and others.
- All **contacts** will be followed every day for 14 days. If you develop signs of COVID-19, do not WAIT, call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909**

j. Home Care: for patients with suspected COVID-19 who present with mild symptoms

- Place the patient in a well-ventilated, single room (i.e. with open windows and an open door).
- Limit the movement of the patient in the house and minimize shared spaces.
- Household members should stay in a different room to the patient (e.g. sleep in a separate bed).
- Family members should maintain a distance of at least 1-2 meters from the patient.
- Limit the number of caregivers. One person who is in good health and has no underlying chronic illness should look after the patient.
- Visitors should not be allowed until the patient has completely recovered and has no signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wash your hands, plates and cutlery with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after any type of contact with the patient or their immediate environment.
- Use disposable gloves and a mask when providing care and when handling stool, urine, and other waste.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after removing gloves and the face mask.
- The patient should wear a face mask.

- Avoid direct contact with body fluids of the patient.
- Do not reuse masks or gloves for yourself or the patient
- Use dedicated linen and eating utensils for the patient.
- All utensils, clothes, and beddings used by the patient must be cleaned with soap and water after use and before re-use.
- Frequently clean and disinfect the bathroom, toilet and surfaces in the room where the patient is being cared for.
- Gloves and protective clothing (e.g. plastic aprons) should be used when cleaning surfaces or handling clothing or linen soiled with body fluids.
- Persons (including caregivers and health care workers) who have been exposed to individuals with suspected COVID-19 are considered contacts and should be advised to monitor their health for 14 days from the last day of possible contact.

k. Physical / Social Distancing

Physical / social distancing prevents COVID-19 from spreading. It can reduce the numbers of people getting infected by the virus.

- Maintain at least more than 1-2 meters distance between yourself and other people.
- Stay at home.
- Avoiding close contact with persons who have flu symptoms.
- Isolating and caring for every confirmed case will reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Physical / social distancing alone will not stop the spread of the disease. It should be used in addition to other prevention measures.

l. Travel

- Avoid all unnecessary travel within the country and to other countries where COVID-19 is spreading to reduce the risk of becoming infected.
- If you have travelled from another country where the disease is spreading you should self-quarantine yourself (i.e. stay at home for 14 days).
- If you have travelled from a place or another country where there is COVID-19 and you develop symptoms of the disease, immediately call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909** for medical attention and tell the health care worker about your recent travel.
- If you must travel, keep safe and follow all preventive measures in the airport, on the plane, and in the hotel.

m. Pregnancy

- Pregnant women are at risk of getting COVID-19 like anyone else.
- It is not known if pregnant women are at higher risk of getting COVID-19.
- Pregnant women should take extra care by following the recommended precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection.
- If you are pregnant and have COVID-19 symptoms (including fever, cough or difficulty breathing) immediately call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909**
- Pregnant women, and women who have recently delivered, should attend all antenatal and postnatal visits even during this period of COVID-19 outbreak.
- Pregnant women with symptoms of COVID-19 will be tested. If they have COVID-19, they will be given the necessary treatment for symptoms they have and any needed medical care.
- It is not known if a pregnant woman who has COVID-19 can transmit it to her unborn child, pregnant women should therefore take preventive measures to avoid COVID-19 infection.

n. Breastfeeding

Women with COVID-19 can breastfeed. However, they should:

- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after touching the baby;
- Cover their nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing;
- Wear a mask, when feeding the baby; and
- Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces they have touched.

o. People with Chronic Illnesses and the Elderly

- Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like asthma, high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop a serious illness if they contract COVID-19.
- People living with HIV are advised to take the same precautions as the general population and continue taking ARVs.
- There is no evidence that ARVs can be used to treat COVID-19.

p. Children

- Children can suffer from COVID-19 like anyone else.
- Protect children from COVID-19 using the same preventive measures as adults.
- While schools are closed children should not play with children from other households.
- Practice physical and social distancing: avoid taking children to crowded places such as markets or shops.
- Allow children to be active and have fun by encouraging them to play games, do exercise, take a walk or ride a bicycle.
- Allow children to continue learning by encouraging them to read books, paint, draw or watch educational TV programming.
- Help your child to cope with the fear and stress related to COVID-19, talk to your child and answer their questions and share facts in a simple way.
- COVID-19 can affect the mental health of your child. Look out and help the child if they get worried or sad, lack appetite and develop poor sleeping habits.
- Be a good role model and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and teach children how to wash their hands.
- Watch your child for any signs of illness. If you see any **symptoms of COVID-19** immediately call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909**

q. Handling the Dead and Safe Burials

- Health care workers who are conducting a post-mortem on a person who has died as a result of COVID-19 should strictly follow recommended infection prevention measures.
- The body of any person who has died as a result of COVID-19 can be buried by the family members. Follow the advice given by health workers for handling the body and regulations for mass gatherings including funerals.
- Cremation of a body of a person who has died from COVID-19 is not a must, it is a matter of choice for the family depending on their culture or wishes and available resources.
- Avoid crowds at the funeral.
- Practice social and physical distancing of more than 1-2 metres from others.
- Frequent handwashing should be practiced during the funeral and at burial.

r. Surviving COVID-19

- You can survive COVID-19.
- Early treatment of symptoms and medical care increases the chance that you will survive COVID-19. Call **0094493553 | 0953898941 | 0964638726 Toll Free line: 909** as soon as you notice the signs and symptoms.
- If you survive COVID-19, continue to protect yourself by following all prevention measures.
- Survivors that are caregivers must take the same preventative steps as anybody else
- Survivors can help others to learn when they tell their stories. Do not push survivors away.

s. Dealing with Stigma

What stigma can do:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination;
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately; and
- Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviours.

Practical Suggestions to Stop Stigma:

- Treat the family and friends of survivors of COVID-19 with respect.
- Health care workers are working to end COVID-19, stop stigma; welcome them and allow them to do their work.
- COVID-19 can affect anyone irrespective of age, colour or nationality.
- Talking to family and friends about your concerns and worries on COVID -19.
- Ask family and friends about their health with openness and respect if they reveal that they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms of COVID- 19.

t. Market Guidelines

Following the Presidential directives for the prevention and control of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Lusaka City council is reminding all ALL TRADERS in MARKETS to adhere to the following guidelines:-

- i. Adequate hand washing facilities with soap and running water MUST be provided in all markets.
- ii. All markets MUST have mechanisms for social distancing.
- iii. All traders in all markets MUST wear face masks at all times.
- iv. All restaurants in markets MUST operate on take away basis.
- v. All customers accessing markets MUST wear face masks.
- vi. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces MUST be done in All markets.