



## **MINISTRY OF HEALTH WELLNESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Guidance on Coronavirus Disease (COVID- 19) for Hotels and Guesthouses in Antigua and Barbuda**

**August 9, 2020**

#### **Introduction**

This document provides information on the COVID-19 for hotels and guesthouses in Antigua and Barbuda.

This information is based on currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion and is subject to change as new information becomes available. It should be used in conjunction with Antigua and Barbuda's national legislation, regulations and policies. This guidance document will be updated as more information becomes available.

#### **Background**

There is an outbreak of pneumonia globally, caused by a new coronavirus, which is a family of viruses that includes the common cold, named COVID-19. Person-to-person spread is occurring in many cities globally, increasing the risk of international spread by travellers.

Travellers from affected countries to Antigua and Barbuda will be asked questions about their health and travel history upon arrival. They may also be subjected to entrance temperature screening, quarantine or isolation.

The Ministry of Health Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE) is working closely with its international health partners to respond to this health threat and provide timely advice and assistance to businesses, organizations, institution and the general public. On January 30, 2020 the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) described the COVID-19 situation as a pandemic. Antigua and Barbuda recorded its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020.

## **What is the COVID-19?**

The Novel Coronavirus belongs to the same family of coronaviruses that causes the common cold, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), 2012. This 2019 virus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

### *Common signs and symptoms of COVID-19*

A person infected may have the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Other flu like symptoms

In more severe cases there can be

- pneumonia
- kidney failure
- death

### *How is COVID-19 transmitted or spread?*

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

## **What can hotels and guesthouses do to prepare for COVID-19?**

Hotels and guesthouses are places where travellers from all over the globe spend time. The risk of the introduction of a case of COVID-19 into a hotel or guesthouse in Antigua and Barbuda is very high. Therefore, the following special measures must be taken to be prepared.

1. Stay informed about the COVID-19 situation in Antigua and Barbuda. Updates will regularly be released by the MOHWE. Additionally, information can be found through the CARPHA, World Health Organization (WHO) WHO or United States Centers for Disease Control (US CDC) websites.

2. Reduce exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 and a range of illnesses are as follows:

- Frequently clean hands with soap and water and using alcohol-based hand rub
- When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue; throw tissue away immediately and wash hands
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough
- Persons who have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider
- Stay home when you are sick to avoid the chance of infecting other people

3. Provide staff with educational materials on COVID-19 so that they are aware of the signs and symptoms, where COVID-19 is spreading, and how it is transmitted.

4. Ensure that the services of a health care provider, preferably a physician, is available at all times to attend to guests and workers. It is advisable that a nurse be available on site to provide basic health care services and advice<sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of Health Wellness and the Environment's COVID hotline (46COVID or 462-6843).

5. Ensure that designated health care providers know that they should to contact the MOHWE in the event that there is a suspected case at your hotel or guesthouse.

6. Ensure that staff are informed about procedures for reporting guests or other staff with symptoms and exposure history compatible with COVID-19 to the relevant health authorities in Antigua and Barbuda.

<sup>1</sup> Please provide the MOHWE with the names and contact information of the designated health care provider(s).

7. Guests or staff suspected of having been exposed to COVID-19, who have symptoms AND exposure history consistent with the disease, should call your designated healthcare provider. Be sure to inform them that you suspect you were exposed to COVID-19 and ask if they can handle such patients or recommend a specific provider.

8. Procedures should be in place at your hotel/guesthouse for separating ill guests/staff from the rest of the hotel/guesthouse population and for minimizing the exposure of guests/staff to potentially contaminated environments while Public Health authorities are called.

9. Should a suspected case be identified in the hotel/guesthouse cleaning of the room or area should be done using regular household soap or detergent first and then, after rinsing, regular household disinfectant containing 0.5% sodium hypochlorite (that is, equivalent to 5000 ppm or 1 part to 9 parts water) should be applied. Personnel who do the cleaning should feel safe to clean the environment and therefore appropriate PPE (gloves, eye protection, a face mask, and protective gown) should be provided.

10. It is important to ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly. Thoroughly cleaning high-touch surfaces with water and detergent and applying commonly used disinfectants (such as bleach) are effective and sufficient procedures. Medical devices and equipment, laundry and food service utensils should be managed in accordance with safe routine procedures. Medical waste, particularly waste associated with a suspected case will be disposed of according to infectious disease waste procedures.

11. Used linen, cloths, eating utensils, laundry and any other item in contact with a patient's body fluids should be collected separately and disinfected in such a way as to avoid any contact with persons or contamination of the environment. Surfaces or objects contaminated with blood, other body fluids, secretions or excretions should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible using disinfectant containing 0.5% sodium hypochlorite (that is, equivalent to 5000 ppm or 1 part to 9 parts water).

- Bag or otherwise contain contaminated textiles and fabrics at the point of use
- Handle contaminated textiles and fabrics with minimum agitation to avoid contamination of air, surfaces and person
- Use leak-resistant containment for textiles and fabrics contaminated with blood or body substances
- Identify bags or containers for contaminated textiles with labels, colour coding, or other alternative means of communication as appropriate
- Don't use laundry chutes

- If hot-water laundry cycles are used, wash with detergent in water  $\geq 160^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $\geq 71^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for  $\geq 25$  minutes.

12. Laundry, food service utensils, and medical waste not associated with a case should be managed in accordance with normal safe routine procedures.

13. Wear a disposable facemask, gown, and gloves when you touch or have contact with an infected person's blood, body fluids and/or secretions, such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine, or diarrhoea.

- Throw out disposable facemasks, gowns, and gloves after using them. Do not reuse.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing your facemask, gown, and gloves.

For Further Information visit the following websites:

- Caribbean Public Health Agency at <http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus>
- World Health Organization website for the 2019-Novel Corona Virus:  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- US CDC site for the 2019-Novel Corona Virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>