**Coronavirus – understanding what’s going on**

**COVID-19. Novel coronavirus. Social distancing. Lock down. There are so many different phrases, statements and changes to our everyday life, it’s no wonder that you can be left confused. Here’s what you need to know…**

The end of March 2020 saw around one quarter of the world’s population living in lock down – that’s 1.3 billion people – as a result of the spread of coronavirus. The virus first emerged in China at the start of the year and has now spread across the globe.

Coronaviruses causes disease in animals and sometimes, they jump to humans. Other examples of coronaviruses you may have heard of include SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome).

This coronavirus, also known as Covid-19, is difficult to control because around 80% of people infected have very mild cold-like symptoms, and it believed that some people don’t show any symptoms at all. They can carry and pass on the virus without even knowing they have it. For the other 20% of people, the infection can be severe and can lead to death.

The most frequent symptoms include a dry cough, fever and general feeling of being unwell. In some cases, this can lead to difficulty breathing.

The virus is spread via droplets when someone coughs or sneezes. When these droplets land on a surface and other people touch that surface and then then touch their nose, eyes or mouth, they can become infected.

**How to stay safe**

The single best way to protect yourself against the virus is to wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, ideally with soap but with hand sanitiser if you are out and about. Secondly, you should avoid touching your face.

The UK Government has recently restricted the way in which we interact in society in an attempt to ease the spread of coronavirus. Social distancing measures have closed schools, workplaces, shops, restaurants, bars and cinemas – effectively anywhere where lots of people gather. The UK population are only allowed out of their homes for certain reasons – and if you do go near other people, you must stay 2 meters of 6 feet away. This is to delay transmission and reduce the scope of the spread.

It is likely that the UK Government will amend the guidelines over time so be sure to visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> regularly for the latest updates.

**If you think you have coronavirus, stay at home and follow the self-isolation guidance found at** <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>**. If your symptoms get worse or you have difficulty breathing, call 111 for assistance (or 999 in an emergency) but do not go to a GP, pharmacy or hospital unless you are told to.**

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