

## PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING Key Messages and Actions

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there have been relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. The virus can be fatal in cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

- \* Know the latest facts.
- \* Understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission.
- \* Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF and WHO and national health ministry advisories.
- \* Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.
- \* Recognise the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) in your child.
- \* Seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/provider and then take your child in, if advised.

REMEMBER that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common. If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's absence and symptoms.

Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe. Keep children in school when healthy. If your child isn't displaying any symptoms such as a fever or cough it's best to keep them in school – unless a public health advisory or other relevant warning or official advice has been issued affecting your child's school. Instead of keeping children out of school, teach them good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent hand-washing (see below), covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin, and not touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven't properly washed their hands.

### **Washing hands properly:**

Step 1: Wet hands with safe running water

Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds

Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water

Step 5: Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel, or hand drier as available.

Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom/ toilets/latrines and whenever your hands are visibly dirty. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Help children cope with the stress. Children may respond to stress in different ways. Common responses include having difficulties sleeping, bedwetting, having pain in the stomach or head, and being anxious, withdrawn, angry, clingy, or afraid to be left alone. Respond to children's reactions in a supportive way and explain to them that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Listen to their concerns and take time to comfort them and give them affection, reassure them they are safe and praise them frequently.

If possible, create opportunities for children to play and relax.

Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.

Provide age-appropriate facts about what has happened, explain what is going on and give them clear examples on what they can do to help protect themselves and others from infection.

Share information about what could happen in a reassuring way. For example, if your child is feeling sick and staying at home or the hospital, you could say, "You have to stay at home/at the hospital because it is safer for you and your friends. I know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but we need to follow the rules to keep ourselves and others safe. Things will go back to normal soon."