



# MEETING GUIDELINES: COVID-2019

Guidance for **participants** attending meetings during the 2019/2020 coronavirus outbreak.

Last updated 18 Feb: Recent information at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

## BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses. Some cause less-severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease such Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Whilst the current outbreak of Covid-19 is still being investigated, it appears to be moderately infectious and able to be passed from human to human, primarily by droplet spread, as for other respiratory viruses. Whilst many cases will be of a mild illness, a small percentage progress to more severe illness and pneumonia. The current risk assessment for HQ New York is **LOW**. This is because the host country has put in place a range of screening and isolation measures that despite occasional cases, are likely to be very effective in limiting the outbreak from taking hold.

## PREVENTION AND GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

At present influenza presents more risk to attendees than Covid-19 does. The same guidance for influenza or any of the respiratory viruses applies equally to Covid-19, as below:

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses:
  - Avoid close contact with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
  - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – this is one of the most effective measures available.
  - Note there is no need for well people in low risk environments to wear a mask
2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell
  - Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or other respiratory symptoms. Seek medical care but first always call ahead to your healthcare provider.
  - Maintain your distance from others – at least 1 m / 3 feet;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue cough or sneeze into your elbow;
  - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, or during exposure to high traffic public areas.

## HEALTHCARE FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

**For respiratory illness:** If you are unwell with fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms is most likely to have a more common illness – the common cold or even influenza – not Covid-19. You should seek care from a health care provider, of which there are many on the city – contact numbers/names are below. If you have fever, cough or respiratory symptoms AND you have been to a high risk location or cared for someone with Covid-19, you may be considered a suspect Covid-19 case. Seek care by phone and ensure you tell organizers or any responding medical personnel of your travel.



**If you or other participants are unwell in the meeting room:** Organizers should contact Security Operations Centre on 3-6666 in the first instance. Security Officers have been briefed on procedures, and the clinical staff of the HQ New York clinic have the appropriate protective equipment, procedures and training to manage ill participants and suspect cases, They will also advise on any necessary cleanup in the meeting room.

**For Medical emergencies:** You should call 911 for NYC paramedics, and also call the Security Operations Centre on 3-6666 to ensure that emergency responders are granted access to the building. The Security Operations Centre will then mobilise a Secretariat medical emergency team.

**For all other medical care:** If you have any other health care needs from needing replacement medication to being unwell, you should go to a local urgent care clinic, or for an emergency, call 911. The HQ New York medical clinic is in the Secretariat Building, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, and is open for walk in consultations from 08h30 to 17h00 weekdays. It provides first aid, urgent care and advice on seeking care from New York City healthcare providers, but *does not* provide prescriptions or replacements for prescriptions.

Contact- [msdnurses@un.org](mailto:msdnurses@un.org)

[HQ New York Clinic reception: 212-963-7080](tel:212-963-7080)

**After hours:** For emergencies call the NYC emergency number 911, for general care seek out an urgent care clinic (eg CityMD, MinuteCare, Urgent care) the closest of which is at 37<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave 212 729 4668

## SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR MEETINGS IN HQ NEW YORK

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Participants should

- Review the 'Advice for Meeting participants' package (including handwashing and cough etiquette advice) and be aware of the signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and how to manage it.
- Ensure you have health insurance for the United States (and preferably, have the influenza vaccine) and bring additional routine medications, spare contact lenses or spectacles, etc.

### DURING THE MEETING

Participants should

- Strictly not attend the meeting if you are unwell, have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
- Undertake regular preventive measures such as cough etiquette and regular handwashing as described in the brochures provided.
- Contact the medical service here in the Headquarters by telephone if you are unwell AND have also been to an 'at risk' location for coronavirus in the last 14 days.

## FAQ'S FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

### **I have an important role or presentation to make and am unwell. What should I do?**

You should not attend the meeting. Speak with the organizers who should have videoconference arrangements in place so that you can attend or deliver presentations remotely.

### **Another participant is coughing and unwell. What should I do?**



The first step is to keep your distance from them – at least 1m / 3 feet. If appropriate, encourage the person to avoid others and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

**Another participant is coughing and unwell AND I am aware that they have recently been in a high risk country. What should I do?**

This is unlikely given the host country screening, but if so and only if you believe there is a risk to participants, then speak with the meeting organizers who have been given advice from the medical service.

**In the event I need to be ‘quarantined’, what does this mean?**

This may be required if you are unwell, and really means 3 key things in practice. You should:

- Avoid contacts – stay in your accommodation and at least 1 m / 3 feet away from others.
- Minimize the spread of virus particles by covering your cough, cleaning surfaces and washing or sanitizing your hands regularly.
- Seek care or advice by phone first – *before* seeing a healthcare provider in person.

**Will there be hand sanitizer available?**

Generally yes. Organizers should have arranged to have hand sanitizer available, although simple handwashing is equally (if not more) effective.

**Should I or other participants get or wear face masks?**

No. There is no evidence that masks help well people in low risk environments, and we discourage their use in the Headquarters. Masks may even increase the spread of virus because we touch/adjust it so often. In line with the UN Medical Directors guidance we will not provide masks to well participants.

**Is there other information available?**

Yes. The information provided in this brief is enough to manage most concerns, however for further information we suggest only reputable and up to date sources. We suggest you review the ‘Travel Advice’ and ‘Protect Yourself’ sections at the World Health Organizations website, which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent guidance.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>