What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)?

Key Message 1: COVID-19 is a respiratory illness.
- COVID-19 is caused by a new virus called SARS coronavirus-2.
- Many cases of COVID-19 have mild or moderate illness.
- Most cases do not require a clinic visit or hospitalization.

Key Message 2: Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms.
- Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Some patients have muscle aches, headache, sore throat, or diarrhea.
- Symptoms usually appear about 5 days after a person is exposed to COVID-19.
- Some patients have pneumonia, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

Key Message 3: COVID-19 is spread from person to person.
- COVID-19 spreads between those who are in close contact (about 6 feet) with one another.
- COVID-19 is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- COVID-19 may also be spread by touching surfaces or objects that have the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

Key Message 4: Anyone who comes into contact with COVID-19 can get the infection.
- COVID-19 can make anyone, including children, sick.
- Older adults (65 years and older) and those with certain health conditions (such as a blood disorder; lung, heart, kidney and liver disease; diabetes; asthma; compromised immune system; neurological conditions; obesity), and those who are pregnant are at greater risk for severe disease.
- People who have recently traveled to cities or areas where the disease has been spreading are at higher risk of catching COVID-19.

Key Message 5: Everyone can protect themselves, their families and the community from COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Key Message 6: The spread of COVID-19 can be stopped.
- Maintain social distancing; that is, keep a distance of about 6 feet between yourself and others.
- If you or someone in your household has been in close contact with a COVID-19 case, stay at home for 14 days.
- If you have symptoms of a respiratory disease, including fever, coughing, muscle aches, sore throat and headache, stay at home for at least 7 days.
- If you have symptoms of a respiratory disease, wear a facemask when around other people, separate yourself in a separate room/bathroom from other people in your home (called home isolation), and call your health care provider.
- Avoid sharing personal household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding.
- Avoid gathering in groups.
- Refrain from visiting friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Key Message 7: It is important to stay healthy.
- Eat healthy, nutritious foods, and go for walks outside – just maintain the 6-feet social distancing rules.
- Use technology (WhatsApp, Viber, Facetime, Facebook, texting) to stay virtually connected with loved ones.
- Find things to do that relieve stress, like reading books, creative hobbies or indoor physical activities, including regular stretching.
- Use telephone or technology to reach out to family or friends if you need help.