



Swedish Organization
for Global Health

Policy Statement on COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

On December 31, 2019, a new virus strain, never detected in humans before, caused the first cases in Wuhan, China. The virus, named SARS-CoV-2 (the name of the disease it causes is COVID-19)¹, has since been identified as part of the coronavirus family. This family includes several pathogens already known to humans, from the common cold to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). Coronaviruses are zoonotic, which means that they are passed to humans by animals, at least in the first instance. The virus can then be transmitted from human to human, as we are seeing with COVID-19.

COVID-19 infection can cause symptoms that vary from mild, with fever and cough, to severe, with shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In the most severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death, especially if the patient is not hospitalized and treated.

To prevent the spreading of the virus, COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic as of March 11, 2020, with the World Health Organization (WHO) providing general guidelines for everyone to follow. These are implemented by individual countries depending on their respective situations. Below is a summary of the main points that must be followed, especially in Europe, which was declared epicentric of the pandemic on March 13, 2020 by the WHO:

What to do:	Why:
1. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds , or if that is not possible use alcohol-based hand sanitizer	Soap and alcohol kill the virus that can be on our hands and be transferred when we touch things or people

2. Maintain social distancing of at least 1 metre (3 feet) , especially with people who are coughing or sneezing	The virus can be found in the respiratory droplets that an infected person expels when coughing or exhaling. Close proximity with an infected individual increases the risk of getting in contact with his/her respiratory droplets
3. Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes with your hands	The hands may have been in contact with a surface that was contaminated with the virus
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or your elbow when sneezing or coughing , dispose of the tissue immediately in a nearby bin	Through these measures you protect others from potential infected droplets (this applies also to other infections, such as cold or flu)
5. If you have fever, cough and/or difficulties breathing, stay at home and call your doctor or the numbers provided by the local health authorities. Do not go to the hospital	These actions will prevent you spreading the infection and give the health staff the opportunity to provide you with the best support
6. Stay informed and follow the situation through the official channels, such as ministry of health, WHO, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) or other health authorities	They will provide daily and updated information of the situation in your area and provide the guidelines to follow based on the most recent scientific evidence

The situation changes on a daily basis, with the number of cases increasing worldwide. Information is constantly gathered by epidemiologists, mathematical modelers and virologists to better understand how the virus is behaving and advise policies to reduce the number of infections and, consequently, the burden on health systems. As of March 17, 2020, WHO reports 179 111 cases and 7426 deaths worldwide. The number of cases in Europe is increasing everyday, with Italy as the most affected country after China. Sweden has, as of March 17, 2020, 1059 cases and 3 deaths, with an increment of more than 900 cases in the last 10 days².

Swedish Organization for Global Health's position

Swedish Organization for Global Health (SOGH), a Swedish non-profit and non-governmental organization comprised of passionate students and young professionals, has the aim of promoting global health through evidence-based actions. SOGH is not able to engage in the active response to COVID-19 in Stockholm, neither by supporting directly the health system nor by the production of data, useful for understanding the new pathogen. However, it is our responsibility as a global health

organization to put some measures in place that will further prevent the spread of the virus as well as to share correct information with our followers via our channels.

Nevertheless, SOGH is actively involved in the response in Uganda. The SOGH team is supporting our partner NGO, Uganda Development and Health Associates (UDHA), in their response to the crisis within the Mama & Family Project activities.

Moreover, SOGH supports the scientific community directly engaged in the response to the pandemic and we stand in solidarity to all people affected, all over the world.

Action for SOGH to take

Our organization, meaning all our members when doing activities/actions in SOGH's name, shall:

1. follow the WHO guidelines (mentioned above) and get information from reliable, scientific sources such as; the WHO, ECDC, scientific journals, etc.;
2. keep in contact with our partners in Uganda to monitor the situation;
3. coordinate with UDHA to provide community health workers and health staff at the Maina clinic personal protective equipment (PPE), specific training and written information on COVID-19 health and safety measures in the local language;
4. cancel all events organized by SOGH until June 30, 2020;
5. ask co-organizers to cancel events we were involved in, even if SOGH will no longer be participating in them any;
6. withdraw from activities that might expose SOGH members to mass gatherings, especially in small spaces (e.g. seminars, workshops, etc.);
7. discourage people, including our members, to travel, especially outside national borders, and cancel any travel related to SOGH activities, even within Sweden, until June 30th, 2020;
8. hold board meetings, as well as any other meeting among SOGH members, on online platforms;
9. share where to find reliable information about COVID-19 with our followers on social media/websites;
10. avoid the sharing of personal opinions related to the local authorities' actions, but keep the focus instead on what individual's actions should be in order to reduce the spread of the virus;

11. put its members' physical and mental wellbeing first, with the director checking-in with the board members, especially if higher restrictions will be put in place, which might affect people's mental health.

References and Resources

1. [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it)
2. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200317-sitrep-57-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=a26922f2_4
3. World Health Organization: [latest updates page](#)
4. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: [latest updates page](#)
5. Public Health Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten): [COVID-19 page](#)
6. Karolinska Institutet: [news on COVID-19](#)
7. London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine: [COVID-19 page](#)