



COVID-19

Advice for seaport personnel

SARS-CoV-2 was first identified in the area of Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has since spread in many countries around the world. It is a new strain of coronavirus that had never, until then, been identified in humans. It causes a respiratory infection called COVID-19.

How is the virus transmitted?

The virus is transmitted from human to human mostly through respiratory droplets from sneezing, coughing or talking. It can also be transmitted through recently contaminated surfaces, if measures of hand hygiene are not used.

When is a case considered more contagious?

A case is considered more contagious if the patient develops symptoms; however, a patient can potentially transmit the infection even 1-4 days before developing symptoms himself. The main period of transmission is during the symptomatic phase. A case is considered as non-contagious 24 hours after symptoms subside.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19 infection?

The main symptoms of the disease are fever, dry cough and fatigue. Some people may also develop sore throat, joint/ muscle pain and nasal congestion. Symptoms are usually mild and approximately 80% of patients recover without need for treatment.

Which patients are considered to be more at risk of developing a severe condition?

Some patients develop dyspnea (difficulty breathing) and possibly, pneumonia that has to be treated in hospital. People in high-risk groups (e.g. elders, patients with heart conditions, diabetes mellitus, liver or lung conditions) are more likely to develop severe symptoms of the disease.

How long does the SARS CoV-2 survive on surface?

It is not certain how long the SARS CoV-2 virus survives on surfaces, but it probably behaves like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours

or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you suspect that a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus then clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. The possibility of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of getting infected with SARS CoV-2 from a package that has been carried, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

Education and raising awareness among port personnel

Raising awareness for detection of cases

- The port health authority should be informed and updated about the outbreak of COVID-19. Moreover, the port health authority should provide training and guidance to their personnel for recognition of the signs and symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI): fever and sudden onset of respiratory infection with one or more of the following symptoms: shortness of breath or cough.
- Personnel should be trained on the procedures to be followed when a traveller displays signs and symptoms indicative of ARI, for providing assistance and on the proper selection and use of PPE.
- Personnel should be trained to recognise symptoms, to provide assistance and to inform the port health authority.
- Information about symptoms, prevention measures and what to do when symptomatic should be displayed in the port.

How can the risk of transmitting COVID-19 infection be reduced at ports?

- Before departure: Information campaigns to raise awareness among passengers and personnel regarding symptoms of COVID-19 and hygiene practices.
- Before embarkation: Informative materials regarding symptoms of COVID-19 and hygiene practices (leaflets, banners, posters, electronic slides, public announcements etc.) can be prepared and distributed to passengers and personnel.
- During travel: Information about symptoms, personal protective measures and promptly seeking medical advice if relevant symptoms develop should be distributed to passengers and personnel.

General measures for prevention of infection transmission

All port areas must be well ventilated while access to running water and soap must be available to allow for good hygiene practice.

1. The first line of defense against infections is good **hygiene practice**. You are advised to wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If your hands are not dirty, you may use a disinfectant instead (e.g. 70 % alcohol solution). Use of gloves should not replace hand washing.
2. Good hygiene practice involves:
 - covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
 - avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes with your hands to prevent bacterial spread
3. Avoid coming in close contact (1 - 2 meters distance) with patients who show respiratory symptoms.

What is the definition of close contact in the port?

Close contact of a probable or confirmed case is defined as:

- A person having had face-to-face contact with a COVID-19 case within 2 metres and > 15 minutes
- A person having had direct physical contact with a COVID-19 case (e.g. shaking hands)
- A healthcare worker (HCW) or other person providing direct care for a COVID-19 case

In case of a COVID-19 suspected case in a port is detected

- In case of a COVID-19 suspected case in a port, the patient needs to be transferred immediately to an area designated for isolation for interview and evaluation by a doctor.
- If the doctor confirms that the case is a COVID-19 suspected case he should contact EODY directly at 210-5212054, or 1135 (24 hours a day), in order to coordinate the transfer of the patient to the hospital for management.
- The Emergency Management Plan must be activated in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease in the port, when an employee or a passenger with COVID-19 symptoms is identified.
- If there is no designated area for the provision of health services, the actions for the immediate transfer of the patient by ambulance to the designated hospital according to the Emergency Management Plan of the port should be taken. The patient must be transferred by personnel well trained in transportation of COVID-19 suspected cases with safety avoiding contact with the port attendants.

Cleaning and disinfection of areas with an increased traffic of passengers

1. Frequent daily cleaning and disinfection of surfaces exposed to passengers, such as knobs, toilet surfaces, etc., as well as emergency cleaning, when surfaces are soiled with biological liquids, if required.
2. It is recommended for cleaning personnel to use personal protective measures in accordance with the guidelines of NPHO. Touching their mouth, nose or eyes with hands, and smoking or eating should be avoided during work.
3. It is recommended to clean the surfaces with an antiseptic disinfectant such as sodium hypochlorite of at least 1:50 solution or 1:10 if the surfaces are visibly soiled with organic liquids.

The port authorities must see that adequate amounts of supplies used for infection prevention are available to and accessibly by the port personnel:

- soap and water or hand disinfectant
- thermometers
- tissues
- standard surgical masks
- disposable gloves

- garbage bags
- surface cleanser

Information to personnel may contribute towards an organized and controlled management of a case of alert. Timely planning and effective prevention can safeguard the personnel's health and maintain smooth port operation. Cooperation with NPHO is important both in establishing measures of prevention as well as in proceeding with necessary actions and the provision of information if a case of infection is reported.

Please note that as the epidemic progresses, this guidance may be modified. For any further clarifications, please contact NPHO at 210 5212054 or 1135 (24/7)

You are kindly requested to inform all port personnel on the above guidance