

GUIDANCE ON MEASURES FOR PREVENTION AGAINST THE SPREAD OF NOVEL CORONAVIRUS 2019-nCoV INFECTION IN SCHOOL UNITS AND EDUCATION FACILITIES

On December 31st 2019, the Chinese authorities informed the World Health Organization (WHO) of a high number of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology, detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. On January 7th, they announced the isolation of a new virus from patients' clinical samples. The virus had been identified as the pathogen causing the cases of pneumonia. The new virus was temporarily named "2019-nCoV" and belongs to coronaviruses, a family of viruses that cause less serious diseases like the common cold, but also more severe diseases such as the ones attributable to SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV viruses. Cases of new coronavirus infections have been reported mostly in China but also in other countries in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America. In Europe, confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus have been reported in France and Germany.

The purpose of this guidance is to inform employees and students in school units across all grades, private tuition facilities and, in general, all education facilities in Greece, on novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection, the preventive measures against its spread and all necessary actions to be taken if a suspected case of infection is reported.

A. Information on novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection

2019-nCoV is a coronavirus strain for the first time isolated in humans. Based on current epidemiological data, it is possible that this strain first developed in certain animal species and was then transferred to humans.

Based on the available epidemiological data, it appears that the new coronavirus is possibly transmitted from human to human through droplets coming from the affected person, through cough, sneezing or direct or indirect contact with respiratory secretions (i.e. through contaminated hands). The incubation period, i.e. the period between contamination and symptom development, is not yet fully determined and is estimated to vary from 2-14 days (average incubation is 5 days).

The most common symptom is fever. Other symptoms of this infection are cough, sore throat, joint pain, muscle pain, fatigue or dyspnea. Most patients develop a mild infection. In case of severe disease, the patient may develop pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress and may have to be treated in an intensive care unit. Individuals with underlying conditions and elder people are possibly in a higher risk of developing severe symptoms. Up to now, the death rate for confirmed cases is approximately 2%

There is no designated treatment for the disease. In most cases, symptoms subside on their own. There are currently no available vaccines for protection against coronaviruses.

B. Special preventive measures against possible spread of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV within education facilities

- Any members of the education facility (e.g. pupils, students, employees, etc.) who have travelled to Hubei Province of China (of which the capital is Wuhan city) or other areas where the virus is still spreading, or individuals who have come in close contact* with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV during the past 14 days and remain asymptomatic, are advised to limit their contacts, refrain from classes or their duties for at least 14 days since their return from Hubei (or other areas where the virus is spreading) or since their last close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection. They are also advised to monitor their health regularly.
- Any members of the education facility with a history of travel to Hubei Province of China (of which the capital is Wuhan city), or other areas where the virus is still spreading, or with a history of close contact* with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection during the past 14 days, who have developed any symptom of respiratory infection (e.g. fever, cough, dyspnea, etc), **must isolate themselves immediately** and seek medical advice as soon as possible. Before seeking medical advice, they must inform their doctor by phone and contact

NPHO (tel. 2105212054). If their condition worsens, they must call the ambulance service (EKAB) and NPHO. With timely information to doctors, EKAB and NPHO, the patient shall be able to take all necessary measures and prevent possible exposure of other individuals.

C. General measures for prevention against the spread of respiratory viruses, including novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV, in education facilities (further to Ministry of Education Circular no.: 4133/2020).

Preventive measures against the spread of respiratory viruses include guidance for personal hygiene as well as for cleaning and disinfecting areas, surfaces and objects.

1. Personal hygiene guidance:

- Any person with symptoms of respiratory infection should stay at home and refrain from classes or work
- Avoid any close contact, if possible, with any person with symptoms of respiratory infection such as coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands to reduce the risk of infection.
- Avoid sharing pencils, pens, markers and other personal items.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover you mouth and nose with your elbow or use a tissue; dispose of the tissue in a garbage bin straight away, and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Children must avoid drinking water with their mouth straight from the tap.
- Practice hand hygiene by regularly and thoroughly washing you hands with liquid soap and water for at least 20". Do so before eating or after visiting the restroom; dry your hands thoroughly using disposable paper napkins which are then disposed of in a garbage bin.
- Alternatively, rub you hands with a hand sanitizer or use alcohol wipes. The hand sanitizer dispenser must be placed near the classroom door and the teacher must supervise its use.

2. Guidance for cleaning and disinfection:

- All areas must be systematically and adequately ventilated, particularly during break time.
- Apart from regular cleaning procedures, all high-touch surfaces must be cleaned frequently (e.g. door knobs, handles, handrails or bars, faucets etc) using standard cleansers, i.e. liquid soap and water or household chlorine solution (10% active chlorine - 1:10 dilution) or alcohol-based antiseptic solution.
- Cleaning staff must wear gloves and uniforms; gloves must be disposed of after use.
- Using disposable gloves does not replace handwashing.

Please note that this guidance has been drafted based on the available epidemiological data and may be modified depending on the course of the epidemic.

♦Note: Close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection is defined as:

- Any face-to-face contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection for at least 15 min., under any circumstances, or
- being in the same closed space with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV infection for more than 2 hours