

Coronavirus: Covid-19 outbreak

This winter, a new variant of the coronavirus, known as Covid-19, was discovered in Wuhan, China. The virus has spread across the world, leading to illnesses, deaths and closures of schools and other public places. Entire countries such as Italy have declared a 'shut down' and recently the World Health Organisation has confirmed the spread of Covid-19 to be a pandemic.

A virus outbreak can be a stressful time, especially when it is an unknown disease. The focus of this resource is to give learners space to voice their concerns; build resilience in coping with the current situation; as well as sharing best practice advice for staying safe and focusing on what acts of kindness we can do to support each other. The situation may be concerning, but it is important to remember that, during an outbreak, professionals across the world work towards understanding a disease and slowing its spread.

This edition of Newsthink encourages learners to consider ways that members of the public can look after each other and to understand the facts about a pandemic. Learners will develop skills to engage critically with information they receive. It also explores the role of practical acts of kindness and emotional support during a disease outbreak.

Learning objectives

Learners will:

- > Understand what both the coronavirus and a pandemic are.
- > Gain knowledge and understanding of expert advice on health and safety.
- > Explore the phenomenon of 'misinformation': understand why fact checking is so important and encourage critical thinking in difficult situations.
- > Explore the meaning of kindness, and how they can start developing this in their own lives.

Definitions activity: what is coronavirus?

Show learners the collection of terms commonly used around Covid-19 on Slide 3 on the PowerPoint and ask them to match the correct definitions to these terms. Answers can be found on the following slide, Slide 4.

Invite discussion about the different terms before revealing the correct answers. If learners are working remotely, they can forward ideas as written messages or via live discussion depending on the form of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) being used.

For more information about the facts behind the Covid-19 outbreak refer to the [British Red Cross Q&A](#) or the [World Health Organisation 'mythbusters' page](#).

Poster activity: what should we do?

Introduce learners to the professional advice given to tackle the virus. The current advice focuses on several key points:

- > Wash hands regularly and avoid touching your mouth and face with unclean hands

- > Cover sneezes and coughs with a tissue, that you throw away, or the crook of your elbow
 - > Self-isolate if advised
 - > Practise social distancing.
- (see definition activity for explanations of these terms)

Learners may have questions what the country is doing about the virus – for example, why do we have to limit our social contact? It is important to emphasise that all strategies share the same goal. Limiting contact with people is a common method for controlling the spread of disease to the most vulnerable. Most people who get Covid-19 will feel mild symptoms and then recover.

Poster activity:

Ask learners to research and create their own posters or design their own social media graphics or 20 second handwashing videos, demonstrating the best ways to stay safe, using the websites linked below. These could be posted during the session if learning remotely or posted on social media by an adult to promote the message. Remember, washing hands and stopping coughs spreading are important all the time, not just for Covid-19.

National Health Service:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>

World Health Organisation:

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

UK Government:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Quiz activity: how can you spot misinformation?

Tracking the spread of misinformation is a big challenge, that runs alongside controlling the spread of a virus. Passing on incorrect details can be harmful. Start a discussion activity with learners about why they think spreading misinformation can cause problems. The activity may be done by, for example, chat facilities if learners are working remotely.

Sharing news with others is a good thing; advising friends how to protect themselves supports resilience and shows kindness. Remember that often people are not intentionally spreading misinformation – just as people do not intentionally spread the virus. The best way to avoid spreading misinformation is to only share information found on trusted sites like those linked above.

Use the short quiz on the accompanying PowerPoint to challenge misinformation and discover how to spot it. Ask learners to analyse the information presented and decide whether it seems trustworthy or not.

Encourage learners to evaluate what they read before sharing it, virtually or verbally. Key questions to ask are:

- > Is this from a trusted source?
- > Is there scientific evidence to back up this claim?

Discussion activity: kindness and resilience

A short period of self-isolation and limiting social contact with others is likely to become a reality for many; understanding why it is necessary, preparing ourselves for it and developing empathy for those experiencing it is key.

Emphasise that it is important to self-isolate to protect others as well as ourselves. Discuss how learners could help friends or relatives who self-isolate because of the virus with simple acts of kindness. They might become lonely or anxious on their own and acts of kindness can help them to cope better with their circumstances. Hold a discussion, face to face or virtually through a video call, and write ideas down on a large sheet of paper, or online. Answers could include:

- > Phoning regularly, using Skype or other methods to stay in contact
- > Do someone's shopping for them and leaving it on their doorstep
- > Playing games or working on projects together virtually
- > Sing from windows like in Italy

Think about some responses which may be less helpful for everyone in society, such as panic buying or blaming others. Encourage reflection about what further issues these reactions may cause and what acts of kindness could the learners do for others instead?

Protecting our mental and emotional wellbeing is also important to building resilience. Encourage learners to share their worries and focus on the things they can control, and how they can help each other stay positive.

Take some time to focus on positive news stories, such as the ways communities are coming together to support each other and appreciate health workers during this period. Collect all the stories about acts of kindness you have heard recently, such as musicians holding concerts on social media or balconies, or people offering to do each other's shopping.

Use the IFRC poster on the PowerPoint for ideas.

Photo activity: recovery

Look at the photograph on Slide 20 of the PowerPoint of the family recently released from isolation due to Covid-19. Encourage learners to reflect on what they would do when they came out of isolation, and what is like for those who are separated from family members. How would you feel to be reunited with friends and family?

- > How would you be resilient whilst in isolation?
- > What is the first thing you would do when you came out?

Thinking about all the activities – what you could you learn from them and remember for the future?