

# **What is COVID-19?**

## **Basic Facts About the Pandemic of 2020**

**By: Gail Elliot, DementiAbility, CANADA  
With: Denise Edwards, AUSTRALIA**



# Important Message

**A serious virus is spreading in our community and around the world. It is called COVID-19. The symptoms include, but are not limited to, cough, fever, fatigue and difficulty breathing.**

**Health experts from around the globe are advising us all about what we can do to stop the spread of this virus. We all need to work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**



## **What is COVID-19?**

**When we first heard about the COVID-19 virus it was called the Coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization the Coronavirus is a “large family of viruses . . . that are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases”. The current virus has been called COVID-19.**



## **How does the virus spread?**

**The World Health Organisation says that COVID 19:**

**“can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales.”**

**“These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.”**



## **Facts About COVID-19**

**As just stated, COVID-19 is a virus that has been spreading around the globe. Some people still call it the Coronavirus, but it is more accurately called COVID-19. The virus has spread to many people, in all parts of the world, and is therefore referred to as a pandemic.**



**In today's world, many people travel, making it easier for a virus to spread to communities large and small. Since this virus is now spreading, and affecting more and more people, governments around the world have been taking advice from world health leaders and establishing action plans to help stop the virus from spreading. Scientists are working hard to find a cure for the virus.**



**In Australia, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Premiers for each State of Australia and their Health Ministers have provided daily updates to the people of Australia. In these updates they provide details about what the Government of Australia, and the different States, are doing to help stop the spread of the virus and what our government plans to do to help the people of Australia. Other leaders are also working hard to stop the spread of the virus and to help the people of their respective countries.**



## **What we all need to do.**

**The most important message from Prime Minister Morrison is that everyone must stay home, unless, of course they are required to work. Only people who are essential workers are encouraged to work. Everyone else is asked to stay home. This means that all people – all families – are asked to stay home until health experts say it is safe to be with others.**



**There are many new rules in place, both in our local States and in all of Australia. These rules will continue to be in place until the health experts advise us that it is okay to once again gather together.**

**Many stores have closed, both in Australia and in other countries. Grocery stores and pharmacies are open, because we all need food and many need medications.**



**Everyone is adopting new daily routines. Schools and libraries are closed, as are other places where people normally gather. If you have tried to watch your favourite sport on television, you will know that many sporting events have been cancelled.**

**These new rules have been put in place to keep people from coming into contact with each other.**

**Health experts recommend that people stay at least 1.5 metres away from each other, which is about 6 feet, to ensure they do not share their germs.**



**This is called social distancing or physical distancing. If you cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze into your arm, not your hand.**

**The biggest challenge is that people may not know they have the virus, because it can take up to 14 days before they have the symptoms. So, everyone is being asked to stay at a distance, to make sure we keep everyone as safe as possible.**



**If families and friends want to talk to each other they need to talk on the phone or use the new technology that is available today, such as a computer, cell phone or tablet, such as an iPad. This new technology will allow people to see each other on the screen as they talk to each other.**

**Another way to stay in touch is to send a letter, or ask someone to write a letter to you. Letters can be sent by email. While talking on the phone or receiving a letter isn't the same as being together, it is what everyone – young and old – has to do right now.**



**Health care workers are great heroes during these difficult days. They are doing their best to care for everyone who needs their attention. We also need to recognise and thank those who help to keep the hospital running. For example, the cleaning staff, dietary staff and anyone else who is doing their part to keep things going.**

**As a society we need to say a great big – sincere – thank you to all of these brave – and exhausted - people.**



**We also need to thank those who continue to make sure we have food and medications in our community and also thank those who are working in nursing homes and in the community helping so many people who require support and care.**

**In Queensland the Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk has set up a Care Army where over 18,000 Queenslanders have enrolled to help the older people in the community. This is growing daily.**



**In hospitals, staff wear a mask, gloves and body suits to ensure the virus does not pass from one person to another. Everyone has to be very careful.**

**You may find that where you are living, people who help you also wear a mask and gloves, and they may also wear a body suit. This special protection is used to keep everyone – including you – as safe as possible.**



**We all need to do our part to wash away and kill the germs that could be carried on our hands. During this time of heightened precaution, it is important for EVERYONE to wash their hands with soap and water regularly and use hand sanitizer often – and that includes you.**



**Infection control experts also suggest that social gestures such as shaking hands and hugging should stop during this time. Since we are firmly being told to avoid shaking hands, we need to find other ways to let people know that we care. So, smile brightly or wave from afar and let everyone know you are happy to see them.**

**There are many details about COVID-19 that are not yet understood. The scientists are busy at work trying to find a cure and new ways to control the spread of the virus. I know we all appreciate their efforts.**



**No one knows how long these new rules will be in place or how long it will take to find a cure – and stop the spread. Let's all work together to keep our distance and do our part to stop the virus from spreading.**

**Let's wash those germs right out of our hands!**

**Keep your distance!  
Wash your hands – often!  
AND  
Stay Well!**



# Important Message

**A serious virus is spreading in our community and around the world. It is called COVID-19. The symptoms include cough, fever and difficulty breathing. We are doing all we can to prevent the spread of this virus. This includes:**

- Limited or no family visits**
- No large group programs**
- Staff may wear a mask, gloves and maybe a gown.**



**For more information about COVID-19 please refer to your local health services and check out some of the websites that are leading the way for us as we navigate the COVID-19 journey.**

**There is also an app called Coronavirus (COVID-19) that can be downloaded onto a computer or mobile phone.**

**World Health Organization**

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

**Australia Government Department of Health**

**[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)**

**CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Unit**

**<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>**

**Note:**

**The purpose of this book is to help people living with dementia learn about COVID-19, according to what is known at the time of writing this document. It also includes details about what we are all being advised to do to stop the spread of the virus (according to local, regional, federal and international health experts and politicians). It is not intended to provide advice – and may not include the most up-to-date information, as the details are constantly changing. To keep abreast of current details, please refer to the World Health Organization website, public health websites, local, provincial and federal government websites and other reputable websites that contain updated information.**



