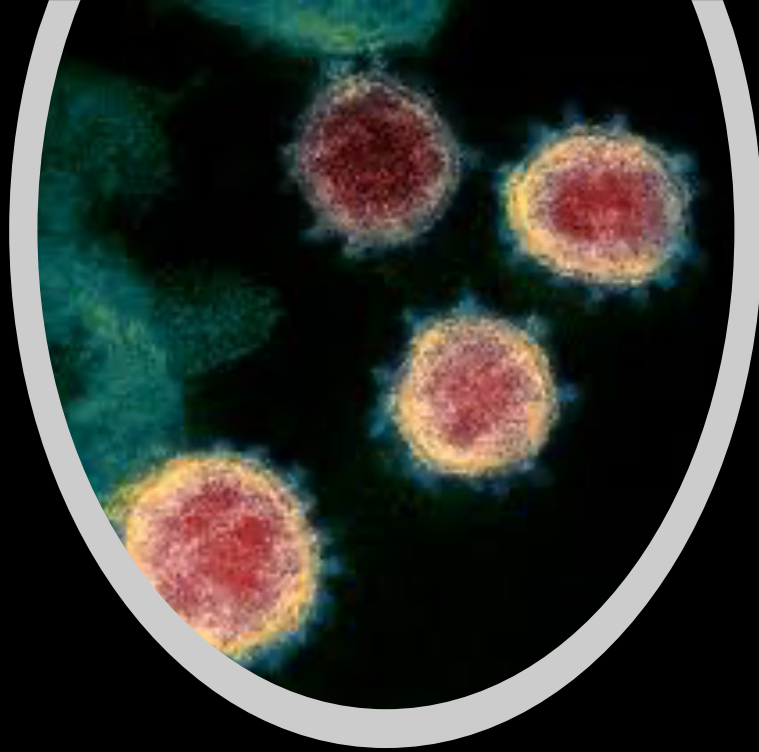




**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT OF SPAIN**  
**Health, Safety and Environment Team**  
c/o Archbishop's House, 27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain



# SARS-CoV-2 / COVID-19 MYTHBUSTERS



# INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus is now officially called SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome – Coronavirus-2). The illness the virus causes is called COVID-19.

Many myths are circulating among the general public. The following slides aim to separate fiction from fact.

The information provided is only from highly reputable sources, including:

- The Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago (MoHTT)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- World Health Organization/ Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO)

# Coronavirus Pandemic Timeline

Medscape

DECEMBER



DEC 31, 2019

WHO is informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology detected in Wuhan City, China \*\*



JAN 11, 2020

Report of first known death due to an illness caused by novel coronavirus



JAN 30, 2020

The WHO declares "public health emergency of international concern"

JANUARY



FEB 7, 2020

Chinese medic who tried to warn about the virus, dies from COVID-19



FEB 29, 2020

US reports its first COVID-19 death

FEBRUARY



MAR 3, 2020

WHO warns of "severe and mounting disruption" to global supply of PPEs



MAR 11, 2020

WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic



MAR 23, 2020

WHO's director general says COVID-19 pandemic "is accelerating"

MARCH



MAR 24, 2020

After a week with almost no new cases, China announces that Wuhan lockdown will be partially lifted, April 8th



Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics postponed until 2021

\*\* etiology = cause



“I saw ‘*Human Coronavirus*’ listed on my Lysol spray can from 2 years ago...”

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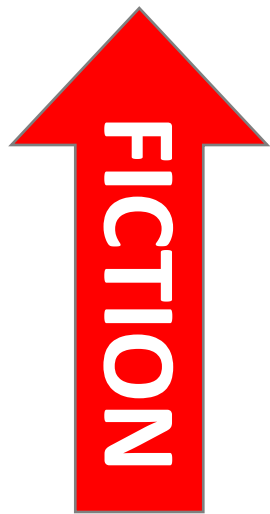
**FACT**

- Human coronaviruses are a family of viruses that have been known to medical science for years.
- Other members of this family include coronaviruses that cause common colds. But, also include SARS\* and MERS\*\* which have caused severe epidemics in the past.

SARS\* = Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

MERS\*\* = Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome

“If I have a runny nose  
that means it’s just  
the common cold”



- Any traveller within the first 14 days of return, must be vigilant for any new changes in his/her body [see table].
- Travellers are encouraged to use the COVID-19 TELEPHONE HOTLINE for advice (at 877-WELL [9355]).

# CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS

	COVID-19	Allergies	Influenza	Common Cold
FEVER	COMMON		COMMON	SOMETIMES
COUGH	COMMON		COMMON	COMMON
SHORTNESS OF BREATH	COMMON			
MUSCLE ACHES	COMMON		COMMON	SOMETIMES
SORE THROAT	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	COMMON
DIARRHEA	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	
CONGESTION	SOMETIMES	COMMON	SOMETIMES	COMMON
LOSS OF SMELL	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES
RUNNY NOSE	SOMETIMES	COMMON	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES
SNEEZING		COMMON		
ITCHY EYES		COMMON		

“The scanner at the airport did not show that I had a fever so I don’t have the virus”

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- Thermal scanners at ports of entry only measure body temperature, but a person can be infected with SARS-CoV-2 without fever initially.
- A fever may develop 2 – 10 days after exposure and for this reason, it is VERY IMPORTANT to self-quarantine IMMEDIATELY upon entry into T&T, for a period of 14 days

“The numbers of infected persons shown on W.H.O. & similar websites are underestimated”



**FACT**

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The count is usually underestimated because:

1. not everyone with symptoms has access to testing
2. there are delays in reporting
3. about 20%\* of infected individuals do not show symptoms (i.e. are asymptomatic)

\* from, Mizumoto Kenji et al. Estimating the asymptomatic proportion of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, Yokohama, Japan, 2020. Euro Surveill. 2020; 25(10):pii=2000180. <https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.25.10.2000180>

“Vaccines which protect against ‘flu & pneumonia protect against COVID-19”

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- **NO.** Vaccines against ‘flu and pneumonia do NOT protect against the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.
- However, vaccines to protect against COVID-19 are being tested in human volunteers but will not be ready for at least another 12 -18 months.



# ACCESS TO VACCINES IN T&T

- **Flu vaccine** is available **without charge** at all public health centres and is recommended for persons 6 months and older.



- **Pneumococcal vaccine** protects against a common type of pneumonia and is part of the routine childhood immunization schedule in T&T.
- It is also recommended for **persons 65 years and older, and for those with chronic lung disease**. This vaccine is also **FREE** at public health centres.

“Rubbing down with coconut oil prevents SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19”

---



- There is **NO evidence** that rubbing your body with any oil prevents COVID-19 infection.
- However, consuming plant-based oils such as olive oil, coconut oil and/or oily fish such as king fish, bonito, and salmon, as part of a healthy diet, strengthens the body's ability to fight infection.

“Garlic can prevent infection from SARS-CoV-2/ COVID19”

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- There is **NO evidence** that garlic prevents infection with SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- However, garlic, ginger, root crops such as sweet potato, yam, dasheen are rich in micronutrients which support the body's defense against infections. These vegetables are inexpensive and readily available.

“Pets (specifically dogs and cats) can spread the novel coronavirus to humans”

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**FICTION**

- There is **NO evidence** that domesticated animals such as dogs, cats (or even guinea pigs) can spread the new coronavirus.
- However, since pets can carry other infections, practising proper hand hygiene is strongly recommended and provides a good example to your children.

“Antibiotics cannot help with the COVID-19 infection”



**FACT**

- 
- Antibiotics treat bacterial infections. Since SARS-CoV-2 is a virus and not a bacterium, it cannot be treated with an antibiotic.
  - However, some patients with COVID-19 might be co-infected with a bacterium and may need antibiotic treatment.



“The virus  
can survive  
outside a  
person for  
days”

**FACT**

Hence the need  
for frequent  
handwashing

## Persistence of Coronaviruses on Surfaces



Source: *J. Hosp. Infect.* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhin.2020.01.022>

Note: Coronavirus activity may be impacted by temperatures higher than 86°F (30°C). Authors also confirm that coronavirus may be effectively wiped away by household disinfectant. COVID-19 was NOT included in this study

**Medscape**

“There are specific medications to prevent or treat COVID-19”

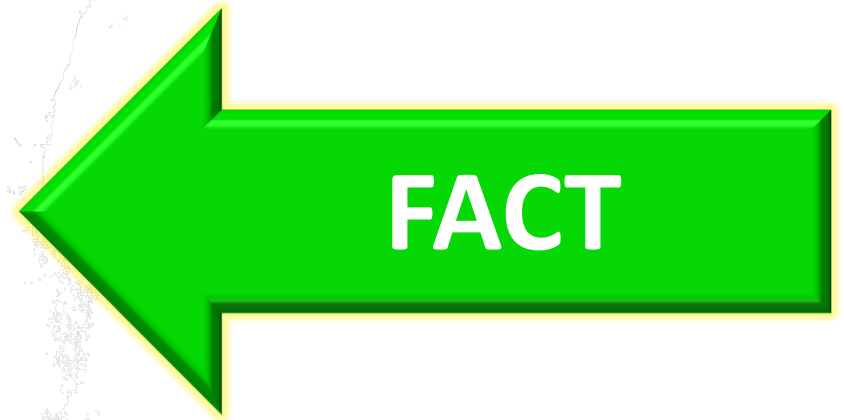


**FICTION**

- 
- Currently, there are **NO specific medications** to prevent or treat COVID-19 infection.
  - However, medicines are available to treat COVID-19 symptoms e.g. Tylenol/ Panadol/Paracetamol, which help to treat fever and pains (e.g. headache and muscle aches).
  - Doctors treating hospitalized COVID-19 patients are trying a variety of drugs already used for other conditions. These include anti-retrovirals (anti-HIV), interferons (anti-viral) and anti-malarial drugs. with specific protocols.
  - The effectiveness of these medications for COVID-19 is still not clear.

# “Sunlight can help us during the COVID-19 pandemic”

- You can maintain good vitamin D levels with daily, daytime, outdoor activity. Morning sunlight (6-10 am) is a pleasant time for exercise, walking, gardening, or just sitting outside.
- When under self-quarantine in your home, do launder your clothes, towels and bed linen separately from those of the rest of the family. After washing, the high heat of a dryer or the UV rays of the sun can help to kill microbes on clothing, towels and sheets.





# “There are different coverings for nose and mouth for different functions”

**FACT**

## WHO advises:

- Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing.
- Wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected COVID-19 infection.
- Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent, careful hand-hygiene using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- If you wear a mask, you must select the appropriate type, fit it correctly and dispose of it safely. Ideally, a mask should be used once & then disposed.



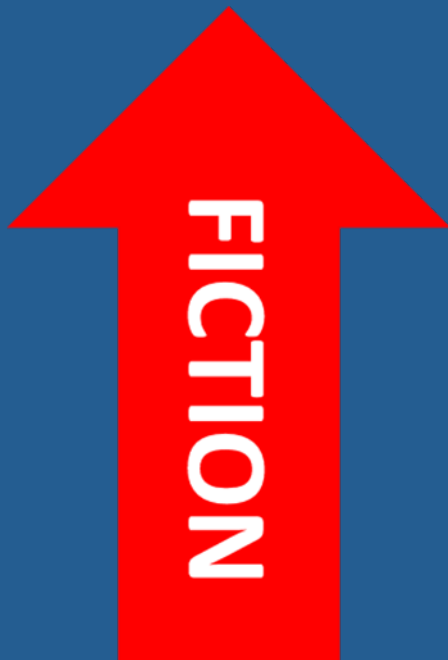
# “Kids can’t catch COVID-19...”

**FICTION**

- 
- Children have tested positive for COVID-19 in all affected countries. So far, the evidence suggests that children usually have a milder infection and can even be asymptomatic carriers of the virus.
  - It is important that children returning to T&T from abroad are also quarantined for 14 days and that attention is paid to hand hygiene (frequent, careful handwashing) and monitoring for new symptoms.



“If you  
have  
COVID-19,  
you will  
know...”



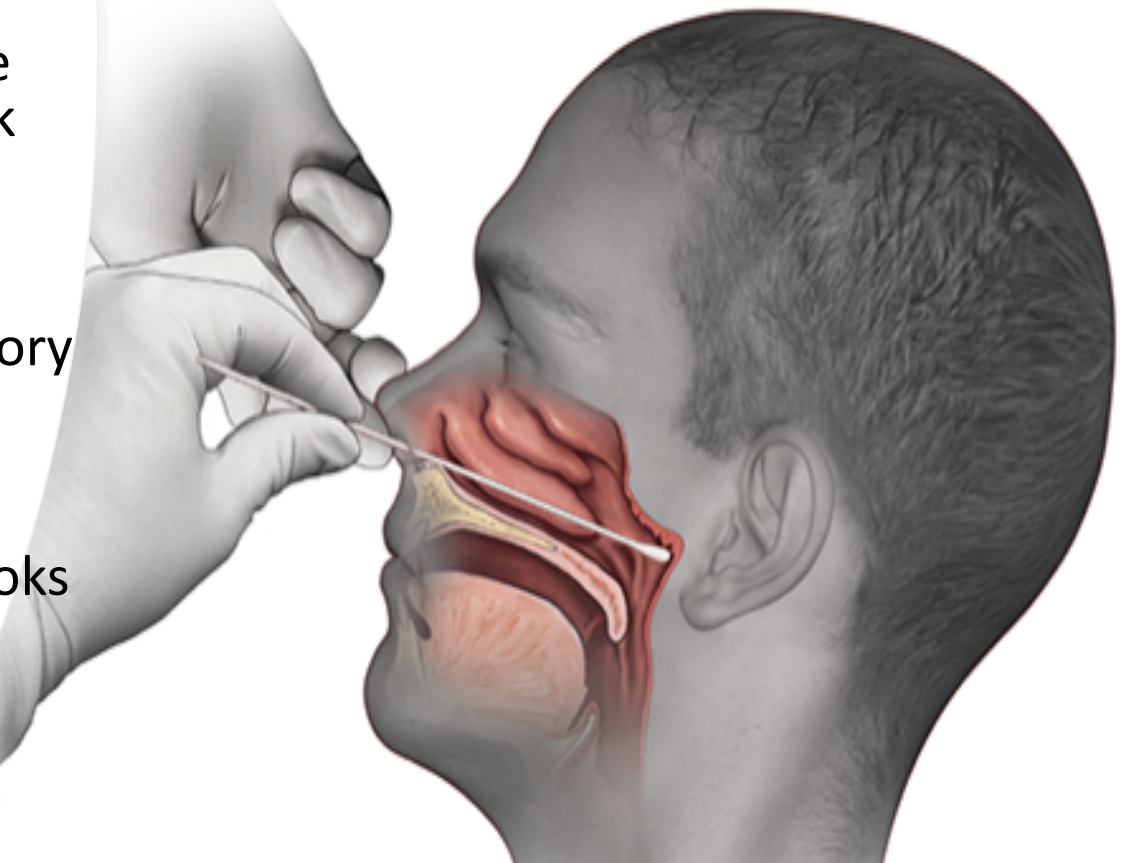
- In T&T confirmation of COVID-19 is by a standardized laboratory test performed at **CARPHA\***, which is the only laboratory recognized by the Ministry of Health for performing this test.
- Test results are available in 24-48 hours and are reported to the Ministry of Health.
- A **POSITIVE** test indicates the presence of the virus (which means that **this patient is contagious**).
- A **NEGATIVE** test indicates that the virus was not detected.

\*CARPHA = The Caribbean Public Health Agency

## “The COVID-19 test is a painful blood test”

- The COVID-19 test is not painful but might cause some slight discomfort
- **It is not a blood test.** A trained healthcare worker uses a sterile cotton bud to swab the back of the nose and another to swab the back of the throat from **symptomatic** patients.
- Samples are best taken within the first 5 days of the onset of respiratory symptoms.
- These samples are promptly hand-delivered to CARPHA.
- The current test for SARS-CoV-2 looks for genetic material specific to the virus.

**FICTION**



# KEEP INFORMED...

- COVID-19 Is a very new disease and our knowledge about it keeps increasing. The following websites will help you to keep informed with up-to-date FACTUAL information,
- MoHTT COVID-19  
<http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=292>
- CDC COVID-19  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- WHO COVID-19  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

