

# Coronavirus - Important Information on the Current Situation

Dear residents of Neukölln,

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, the first confirmed case of Coronavirus was reported in Neukölln. Due to the contradictory and, at times, premature reporting by the press you are perhaps understandably concerned.

We hope that the information provided in this leaflet will help ease your fears and worries while also helping you to deal appropriately with the situation in your circle of family and friends.

## How can I become infected with the virus (SARS-CoV-2)?

The virus can only be transmitted via contact with an infected person. The following information is what we have learned about the virus up to now:

- The virus is spread via **airborne droplets**, especially via the saliva of infected persons.
- **At distance of less than 1 metre (face-to-face), at least 15 minutes continuous contact with an infected person is necessary for transmission to occur.** Contact for a shorter period of time does not allow the virus to reach the concentration necessary for infection..
- **If standard hygiene measures are being followed, transmission via surfaces (door handles, handrail in the subway, table surfaces) can be ruled out.** In contrast to the measles virus, Coronavirus cannot survive long enough on surfaces or in the air for transmission to take place.
- There have been no reported cases of transmission via food.

## How can I protect myself?

**For personal protection, the standard hygiene measures are standard hygiene measures are necessary and offer sufficient protection.** These measures also help protect against other types of infectious diseases, like seasonal flu:

- Regular hand washing (several times a day) with soap for at least 20 seconds is as effective as using a disinfection product.
- To protect those around you, cover your nose and mouth with a paper handkerchief when sneezing or coughing. If you do not have a handkerchief, then make sure to sneeze or cough into your elbow and not into your hands.
- **The transmission of the virus is unlikely at a distance of two metres from an infected person.**
- Citizens over 60 years of age should review their vaccination status (See point 4)

## Which types of protective measures are ineffective?

To help conserve resources, only the most effective protective measures should be used. The following measures do not protect you or those around you:

- Only those who are possibly infected but still required to move through public spaces should wear a face mask (for the protection of others).

- **Commercially available surgical masks do not offer sufficient protection against infection by other persons (self-protection).** In fact, they can actually lead people to neglect the necessary hygiene measures (See point 2).

- Disinfecting surfaces does not provide protection against infection with Coronavirus. If the standard hygiene measures are being correctly applied, you need not worry about infection via door handles or other surfaces.

### Who is especially at risk of infection?

No immunity against Coronavirus has yet been recorded. This means that, in theory, everyone could become infected. 80% of all previously recorded infections have been mild or completely symptom-free.

### **In the event of infection, the following groups are particularly at risk:**

- Patients with an underlying respiratory disease, such as pneumonia or whooping cough
- People with a weakened immune system
- Those over 60 years old

Children can also become infected. However, the disease tends to be very mild or even completely free of symptoms. Therefore, special protective measures for children are not recommended. Pregnant women are also not at a higher risk of suffering a more severe form of the infection. Nevertheless, children and pregnant women should follow the necessary hygiene measures to slow the transmission of the virus.

### What are the dangers posed by Coronavirus?

Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) triggers a disease (COVID-19) which is not fatal in itself. However, the presence of pre-existing medical conditions or a weakened immune system can cause the development of serious complications (superinfections). Therefore, vaccinations against respiratory disease are recommended. The following are recommended by the Standing Commission on Vaccination (STIKO in German):

- Pertussis
- Pneumococci
- Influenza

The **Berlin Hotline** for information on Coronavirus can be reached at 030 90 28 28 28. Information is currently only available in German.