

Important information on the current situation

Dear residents of Neukölln,

On 3 March 2020, the first confirmed case of infection with the coronavirus in Neukölln came to light. Due to the press coverage, which has often been contradictory and hasty in parts, you may also have understandably experienced great uncertainty during this time.

In cooperation with our health authority, we would like to provide you with this information to help you channel your fears and anxieties. This is aimed to help you contribute to a vigilant but appropriate handling of the situation in your circle of friends and family.

Please help us slow the spread of the virus so that all those suffering from illness can continue to receive the best possible medical care!

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

The infection occurs mainly via the body fluids of the respiratory tract. Transmission can take place through small droplets as well as the smallest droplets in the air (known as aerosols). This means that the risk of infection is particularly high, for example, when speaking or singing together in closed rooms, but also in close physical proximity, such as when kissing and through greetings such as cheek kissing, hugging and shaking hands.

Transmission via surfaces is unlikely, but not impossible. Hand hygiene is nevertheless an important protective measure (see "How can I protect myself and others?").

Cases of transmission through food are as yet unheard of.

- **How can I protect myself and others?**

The measures mentioned below are aimed at protecting each and every individual and thus protecting the entire population.

The more people get involved, the less chance there is of the virus spreading further!

Here you will find an overview of the most important hygiene measures:

1. Wear a face covering (e.g. made of fabric) in closed or poorly ventilated rooms if you come into contact with other people outside your household (on the underground, in the supermarket, at work). Home-sewn face coverings are sufficient for daily use. They should be made with several layers if possible.
2. Keep a distance of at least 1.5 m from other people in public (even with a face covering!)
3. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a paper tissue
4. Ensure all closed rooms are regularly aired out. Constant ventilation would be even better and is recommended. This is especially important when several people are staying or have stayed in a room. The windows should be wide open when the room is aired out – ideally there should be a breeze flowing through the room.
5. If you are ill, it is essential that you stay at home until you have been checked. This also applies to coughing and sneezing. However, for children attending day-care centres or other communal facilities, a blocked or runny nose in itself is not a sign of risk; special procedures apply here.

6. Avoid close contact indoors with people who do not live with you in your house/flat (no large family gatherings, no parties) wherever possible, especially in closed rooms.
7. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap (min. 20 seconds), especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose, and after spending time in public places (e.g. after shopping or travelling on public transport). Important: Using hand sanitiser has no advantage over washing your hands and even with frequent use there are risks.
8. Touch your face as little as possible so that no viruses are transmitted via your hands.
9. Stay informed on the latest recommendations (see "Where can I find more information?").

Please bear in mind that the more people who follow all of these measures, the better they will work. Even if you consider yourself to be healthy and in the low risk group, there are sure to be people around you (your family, neighbours and colleagues), who have an increased risk of serious illness (see "Who is particularly at risk?"). Severe cases of the disease can even occur in young people with no previous illnesses.

- **What can I do if I fall ill or would like a swab test?**

The following signs of disease frequently occur with the coronavirus disease CoViD-19:

- Loss of senses of smell and taste
- Fever
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- General feeling of illness/fatigue
- Pain or painful limbs
- Runny nose
- Diarrhoea

If you show signs of having the coronavirus, it is essential that you stay at home and contact your family doctor first. If you cannot reach them, please contact the medical on-call service of the Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (*Kassenärztliche Vereinigung*). They can be reached around the clock on the telephone number: 116 117.

If you have severe signs of illness and you cannot reach another doctor, and especially in case of respiratory distress, you must call the emergency number 112.

If you have had direct contact with a person who has tested positive and you show no signs of illness, contact your local health authority immediately. You can contact the Neukölln Health Authority (*Gesundheitsamt*) via the telephone number: 030 90239 4040 or via email at: GesHyg@bezirksamt-neukoelln.de.

If you think you need a coronavirus swab test for any other reason, you can discuss this with your family doctor or contact the Neukölln Health Authority hotline via the telephone number: 030 90239 4040. Swabs can be taken in our coronavirus swab test centre under certain conditions and only after prior notification. You can find further information on our coronavirus swab test centre on our homepage at: <https://www.berlin.de/ba-neukoelln/caz/>.

- **What should I do if my child is ill?**

Children whose only symptom is a blocked or runny nose may attend community facilities such as day-care centres etc. However, if further symptoms arise that are typical for the symptoms caused by the coronavirus Covid-19, such as coughing, fever, sore throat, loss of senses of taste and smell or a headache and painful limbs, a coronavirus test may be sensible idea. In any case, community facilities should not be visited until the patient has been free of symptoms for 48 hours.

- **Who is particularly at risk and who is not?**

Most cases of COVID-19 progress very mildly. The risk of being infected is equally high for everyone. However, some groups of people have an increased risk for experiencing a more severe progression of the disease. These include:

- Older people (the older the person, the higher the risk)
- People with certain previous illnesses, regardless of age. These include:
 - Certain diseases of the cardiovascular system
 - Certain diseases of the respiratory tract
 - Diseases associated with a weakened immune system (e.g. cancer)
 - Certain liver and kidney diseases.

Your family doctor can tell you if you personally have an increased risk of illness.

An increased risk of a more severe progression of the disease has as yet not been proven for:

- Pregnant women
- Children

In rare cases, the disease can also progress more severely in young and healthy people.

- **What else should I look out for?**

The most important instruction is to adhere to all hygiene measures listed above (see “How can I protect myself and others?”).

Please don't forget that there are other diseases besides the coronavirus disease CoViD-19. This means:

- Have your vaccinations checked (by your family doctor)
- Attend all planned preventive medical check-ups
- Make sure you do not run out of the medication you need and help your relatives with this too
- Attend all of your children's preventive and vaccination appointments
- Continue to make sure you are living a healthy lifestyle

If you are scared of being exposed to infection in your doctor's waiting room, call them in advance and ask for advice.

- **Where can I find further information?**

You can find further reliable information on the following web pages:

- https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/nCoV.html

See here also “Frequently asked questions“

- <https://www.infektionsschutz.de/coronavirus/> (available in several languages)
- <https://www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/ib-de/amt-und-person/informationen-zum-coronavirus> (available in several languages)
- For parents and children: <https://www.bvki.de/eltern/>

- **Where can I get help? An overview of all helplines**

- Neukölln Health Authority coronavirus hotline: 030-90239 4040
- Neukölln Health Authority email address: GesHyg@bezirksamt-neukoelln.de
- Berlin coronavirus hotline: 030-9028 2828
- Berlin child protection hotline: 030-610066
- Domestic violence hotline: 0800-0116016
- Neukölln neighbourhood assistance: 030-62933320

If you have problems you can't solve on your own, please don't hesitate to reach out for help. The current situation is a big challenge for all of us, but there are also many ways to get help.

- **Here's how the Neukölln Health Authority can support you in the context of the coronavirus pandemic**

If you have any more questions about the coronavirus, we would be happy to provide you with individual advice. Contact our hotline. We can then forward you to the relevant point of contact depending on your enquiry.

Our hotline is open from Monday to Friday during the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on: 030-90239 4040. You can also reach us via the email address: GesHyg@bezirksamt-neukoelln.de

We have advisory teams available for you in the following areas:

- Medical advice concerning the coronavirus, e.g. if you are ill or you believe you have been infected
- Advice on measures to take in the context of the coronavirus pandemic
- Welfare advice for those in quarantine (if you need help)

The health authority also provides direct advice to schools, day-care centres, social institutions and medical care facilities. Among other things, the health authority monitors compliance with the necessary hygiene measures and initiates necessary measures to prevent infection.

In accordance with infection protection law, the health authority must quickly be informed about all coronavirus cases. Those who have tested positive will then be contacted and it will be discussed as to how to proceed (e.g. if a quarantine will be ordered). A large part of the health authority's work comprises identifying people with whom positively tested persons have been in contact. They will then also be contacted by the health authority to discuss all further measures.

If you yourself have tested positive and you have not yet been contacted by us or you have had contact with someone who has tested positive, please contact us yourself (see below).

The health authority also initiates testing for the novel coronavirus to detect infected individuals as quickly as possible. For example, throat swabs can be taken at the coronavirus swab centre (CAZ: *Corona-Abstrichzentrum*) on the Sonnenallee.

Find further information on this subject at: <https://www.berlin.de/ba-neukoelln/caz/>

If you are eligible for a test, you can register via your employer or through our doctors. We ask for your understanding that tests can only be administered after prior registration. In certain cases, swabs can also be taken at home.