

PRESS RELEASE

3 March 2020

Update from Ministry of Health regarding COVID-19

COVID-19 Information for Businesses

Earlier today a letter was sent from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer to various business organizations across the island, including the Association of Bermuda International Companies (ABIC), the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers (ABIR) and the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce, stating actions which can be taken by the business community to help respond to the emerging public health threat COVID-19.

Advice includes avoiding non-essential travel to areas with cases of COVID-19 and following the same basic precautions we all use to prevent the common cold and flu: wash your hands often and well with soap and water, cover your cough, and stay home when you're sick.

In the letter, the Ministry of Health shares essential tips that workplaces can implement to help minimize the spread of any respiratory illness (see attached). These include:

- Providing disinfecting wipes for employees to use in their work spaces;
- Providing hand sanitizer in the office reception and communal areas;
- Reminding your office cleaners to wipe down commonly-touched surfaces thoroughly, including but not limited to: door handles, access keypads, kitchen taps, coffee pots and kettles, fridge handles, and water cooler taps;
- And encouraging staff to wipe down their work spaces thoroughly.

This letter follows an email from the Minister of Health the Hon. Kim Wilson JP MP to ABIR on February 26 containing a similar message. In the email, Minister Wilson said, "I would invite you to advise your membership to rely on credible information sources in particular the Bermuda Government website, its Facebook, Twitter, Instagram feeds and the Tree Frog App which are the official sources of Ministry of Health information."

The Minister of Health the Hon. Kim Wilson JP MP said, "Washing hands and using antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer may seem like overly simple things to do to combat serious respiratory illnesses but they are in fact two of the most effective methods. **To that end, the Government is actively resourcing extra supplies of hand sanitizer for the island. Once on-island, they will be available at government offices and will be distributed throughout the community, starting with at-risk segments of the population such as seniors. Additionally, Government will waive customs duty on hand sanitizer, protective masks and other supplies as Department of Health deem necessary, in the fight against influenza and COVID-19.**"

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Cheryl Peek-Ball said, "If you've recently travelled to a country where this virus is spreading and you have symptoms, it's very important for you to call your healthcare provider to let them know about your symptoms and travel history. They will assess you to ensure you get the treatment that you need while also limiting the risk of passing along an infection to others.

"The Ministry of Health has received many calls from members of the business community lately seeking advice on whether or not to travel to certain places for work-related activities. I would like to take this opportunity to direct those individuals to our website www.gov.bm/health-information where they can find the latest travel advice. Ultimately, the decision is the individual's as to whether they travel to certain countries as; we can't make it for you. Certain places have a high level of transmission so, if you go, you may be asked to self-quarantine upon return. Likewise, if you go to a place with a lower level of transmission, you may be asked to self-monitor upon return to Bermuda. And obviously the situation is fluid, so you may visit a country deemed to be 'low risk' which may elevate to 'high risk' while you are there and therefore this would require you to follow more intense monitoring when you return."

Please also see links below for further information:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>