

Template 2: Coronavirus Myth vs. Fact

Sources: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>

There's a lot of information flying around about coronavirus at the moment, and not all of it from reliable sources. So, let us sort the fact from the fiction and set the record straight on some of the myths surrounding this new virus.

Coronavirus only affects old people

People of any age can get coronavirus. Older people are more likely to become seriously ill if they get the virus, but this is also true of people who have long-term medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease). Health workers are also more vulnerable because they're likely to have a higher exposure to the virus.

Coronavirus is no more dangerous than winter flu

It's true that many people who get coronavirus won't experience anything worse than the usual symptoms of winter flu. However, the overall profile of coronavirus, including its mortality rate, does look more serious. It's thought that, with a fatality rate of 1%, coronavirus is about 10 times more deadly than winter flu.

People can pass on coronavirus even if they don't seem ill

It's thought that people are most contagious (ie. most likely to pass the virus on) when their symptoms are at their worst. It is possible that coronavirus can be passed on before people show any symptoms, but it's not thought to be the main way it spreads.

It's not safe to receive post and parcels from China or other affected areas

There's no evidence you can get coronavirus this way. In fact, viruses like this can't live for long outside the body. So, the risk of catching coronavirus from a parcel that has

travelled, and been exposed to different conditions and temperatures as it has, is pretty low.

We should all avoid public transport and places

Only people who have been to a high risk area in the last 14 days or have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus need to avoid being in public. The rest of us should continue going to work, using public transport, and going to public events and places.

I should wear a face mask in public

It's widely recommended that only people who have symptoms of coronavirus and those caring for them (like health workers) should wear face masks. There's little evidence they offer much benefit to anyone else. The best way to protect yourself is to try and prevent the spread of viruses by regularly washing your hands with soap and water, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and avoiding close contact with people who are unwell.

Is it safe to use public transport?

NHS guidance says you should continue to go to work, use public transport, and go to public places as normal unless, in the last 14 days, you have:

- Returned to the UK from a high risk area (including China, Iran, parts of South Korea and Northern Italy)
- Been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus.

In either of these circumstances, you should call 111 immediately for advice.
