

COVID-19 Questions & Answers

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new type of coronavirus that has not previously been experienced by humans.

How is COVID-19 spread?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth when a person with COVID-19 coughs, exhales, or sneezes, this is why it is essential to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick. These droplets can also land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Most people will have mild symptoms of COVID-19, which can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing. Some patients can develop a severe illness such as pneumonia or kidney failure, which may lead to death in some cases.

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?

There is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19. However, a lot of work is going into finding one. Currently, patients with COVID-19 are cared for with symptom management.

Who are the at-risk members of the population?

Older adults or people who have pre-existing health problems are the members of the population who could develop more severe symptoms.

Where are the affected areas?

These are countries where COVID-19 is widespread; they include; China, South Korea, Singapore, Iran, and the Northern region of Italy.

How can I protect myself against COVID-19?

These recommendations are mainly for those traveling, but everyone should practice good hygiene standards in regards to handwashing and coughing/sneezing at all times.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water regularly and thoroughly, including wrists for 20 seconds at least
- Cough and sneeze on the inside of your elbow or in a clean tissue
- Limit touching your mouth, nose or eyes
- If sick, call the hospital and limit social contact
-

What is the situation of COVID-19 on St Martin?

Three people have tested positive for COVID-19, two of which are in isolation in the hospital on the French side of St. Martin and one at home on St Barth. The contacts of these patients are being

monitored closely by the French Public Health Department with whom we remain in close contact.

What are some challenges on Saba in controlling this virus?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to process the test for COVID-19 on Saba. Tests must be sent to The Netherlands for the processing, which may take 3-4 days at least. However, all equipment necessary to take samples is readily available to us.

The supply of some equipment may, in the future, be challenging. Internationally, the demand for protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizer is currently very high. Therefore we may encounter shortages.

Many other Public Health infectious disease requires our attention and resources including the flu and common cold which is ongoing on Saba as well as remaining vigilant for dengue fever which is present on the French side of St.Martin.

How are possible patients identified?

Immigration at both the airport and harbor are aware of the necessary protocol in managing any suspected cases of COVID-19. They will be asking those who arrive on the island if they have visited the affected areas in the 14 days before arriving on Saba and will notify the Public Health of any such cases.

Passengers who have traveled in the affected areas in the previous 14 days and have symptoms will be isolated directly and assessed by Public Health. If passengers have gone into affected areas but have no symptoms, Public Health will contact them and assess their risk status. If they are at a high risk of developing/transmitting COVID-19, we will quarantine them. Otherwise, we will instruct them on maintaining perfect hygiene and what to do if they get sick. We will then contact these passengers daily to inquire if they have developed symptoms. The process of contact tracing will also occur to control the spread of the virus.

Will people with symptoms be isolated in the hospital?

Where at all possible people displaying symptoms will be isolated at home.

If the person is very unwell and requires medical care, the hospital contains well-equipped isolation facilities. Protective equipment is also available at the hospital, and the staff has undergone extensive training in the management of infection control issues.

If I feel unwell, what should I do?

If you have not traveled to the COVID-19 affected areas, then most likely, you do not have COVID-19. It is important to remember that the common cold and flu are still present on Saba, and you may be feeling unwell because of this. However, if you develop symptoms like those of COVID-19 and think you may have been in contact with the virus, you should **phone** the hospital on +599 416 3288.

[Take home message](#)

The threat of COVID-19 reaching Saba is real, and the government is working closely with neighboring islands, the RIVM and the World Health Organization, to prepare for a possible introduction of a suspected patient. We want to remind residents of Saba that there are currently no cases or contacts of COVID-19 on Saba. Everyone should maintain excellent hygiene practice, especially if you are traveling off-island. If you think you have symptoms of COVID-19, it is essential to call the hospital instead of visiting it. The Public Health Department will provide frequent updates on the situation.

If you have queries, please contact the Public Health Department on +599 416 3311 ext.314