



Internews

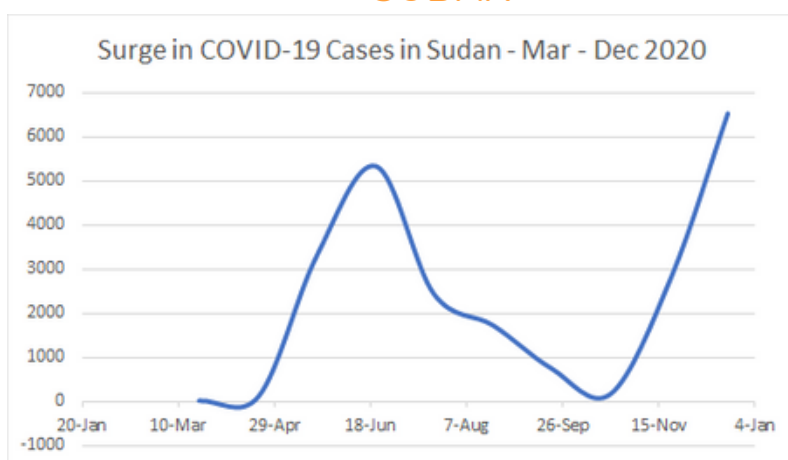
The Sudan the Rooted in Trust (RiT) project aims to address COVID-19 misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media and through face-to-face discussions with community members. This bulletin is based on an analysis of 637 rumors collected in Arabic between 2 December and 17 December 2020, from Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and listening activities from various areas around Khartoum.

In this week's bulletin we shed light on a variety of rumors, such as COVID-19 stigma, masks can cause suffocation, herbal remedies, white people are more prone to the virus, wudu' can prevent COVID-19, testing can get you infected, and COVID-19 vaccine can alter DNA. This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It aims to help volunteers and field staff provide fact-based answers to their communities' questions and concerns.

## COVID-19 SITUATION IN SUDAN

We have been witnessing an increase in COVID-19 cases in the past two weeks. As of 18 December 2020, the official number rose to 22,963 confirmed COVID-19 cases, compared to 18,245 cases on November 30. Most cases identified have been in the capital Khartoum and surrounding areas.

## SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES IN SUDAN



Source: Figures provided by the Sudanese Health Ministry



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

COVID-19 HOTLINE - SERVING ALL

AREAS OF SUDAN: 9090



SUDAN HEALTH OBSERVATORY

[WWW.SHO.GOV.SD/CONTROLLER](http://WWW.SHO.GOV.SD/CONTROLLER)



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

[WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR](http://WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR)



COVID-19 IS REAL AND THERE ARE NEW CASES DIAGNOSED ALL THE TIME!  
BE SAFE: MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE, WASH HANDS, WEAR A MASK

### WHAT ARE RUMORS?

RUMORS ARE CURRENTLY CIRCULATING STORIES OR UNVERIFIED REPORTS OF UNCERTAIN OR DOUBTFUL INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM FIRST-HAND SOURCES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHICH COULD TAKE THE SHAPE OF A QUESTION, CRITICISM, OR GENERAL COMMENTS ON A SITUATION OR TOPIC. RUMORS CAN BE TRICKY BECAUSE THEY MIGHT HAVE SOME ELEMENT OF TRUTH IN THEM!

RUMOR RISK LEVEL



HIGH



MEDIUM



LOW

## RUMOUR #1

## TREATMENT

“Aragi ‘locally-made alcohol’ kills Corona”  
Male -Khartoum

We often hear people asking whether drinking alcohol will cleanse your organs and kill the virus. According to the World Health Organization, drinking alcohol cannot cure the virus nor prevent a COVID-19 infection. On the contrary, it can cause serious side effects. The best way to protect yourself and others is by following the known health measures:

- Washing your hands regularly
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow and not your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Maintain a physical distance of at least 1 meter from others
- Wear a mask when public or feeling ill

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #3

## COVID-19 IMPACTS

“Corona affects fertility in both women and men” Female -Omdurman

This is not correct. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information there are no published studies or evidence to suggest that COVID-19 does in fact cause infertility amongst men and women.

COVID-19 is a new virus and scientists are still trying to understand its symptoms and what side effects it causes, and this leads to the spreading of misinformation on social media platforms.

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #2

## STIGMA

“My father died and was suspected of having COVID-19 during the first wave. Most people stopped speaking to us, and some family members did not even call us by phone. We have neighbors that even moved houses.” Female - Facebook

COVID-19 is a new global pandemic that can affect anyone from any race, religion, or gender. To tackle this disease as a community we need to correct misconceptions around COVID-19 and correct prejudiced behavior which may lead to people being discriminated against or isolated by their community. Stigma can also lead people to hide symptoms and avoid seeking healthcare when they need it the most. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, such discriminatory acts often cause anxiety, depression, or shame.

We can tackle stigma by correcting damaging and inaccurate information about the virus that can cause more harm to infected individuals and their families within our community. It is both our individual and collective responsibility to protect vulnerable members of our community. Hateful and bigoted acts have no place within our communities. Always educate yourself and keep up to date by following trusted sources such as the World Health Organization.

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #4

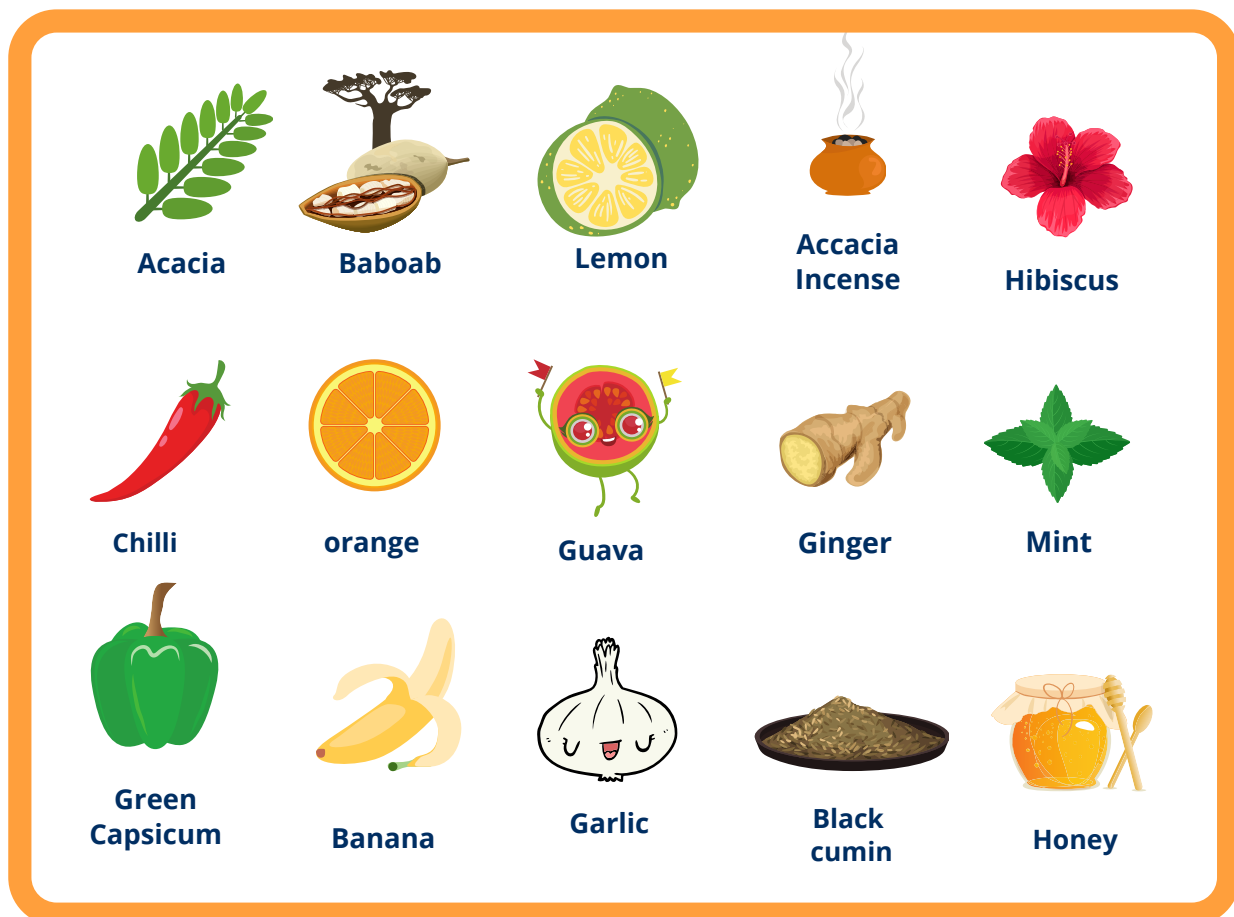
## TREATMENT

"I'm the only one in our household who didn't get it. I do not know the secret behind this, even though I used to nurse them. I say the secret seems to be the juice. I'm always mixing green capsicum with lemon, guava, orange and mint, and I used to serve them this drink. I would drink acacia, baobab, ginger, hibiscus, and banana which is high in zinc, plus honey instead of sugar and gargling with salt water" Female -Facebook

Most herbs and plant-based foods are beneficial for our bodies and are great sources of vitamins and essential nutrients, such as garlic which has antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence that herbal remedies can cure or prevent COVID-19. In fact, there is no cure for the virus.

According to the World Health Organization, the best way to protect yourself from contracting COVID-19 is by keeping a distance of one meter from others and by washing your hands frequently and thoroughly. To stay healthy, maintain a balanced diet, stay well hydrated, exercise regularly and sleep well.

## HERBAL REMEDIES ARE NOT A CURE FOR COVID-19



Maintaining a balanced diet rich in nutrients and vitamins boosts our immunity, but does not prevent a COVID-19 infection.

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #5

## PREVENTATIVE

"I want to know how to wear a mask, do I place it on my beard or my nose?" Male -Facebook

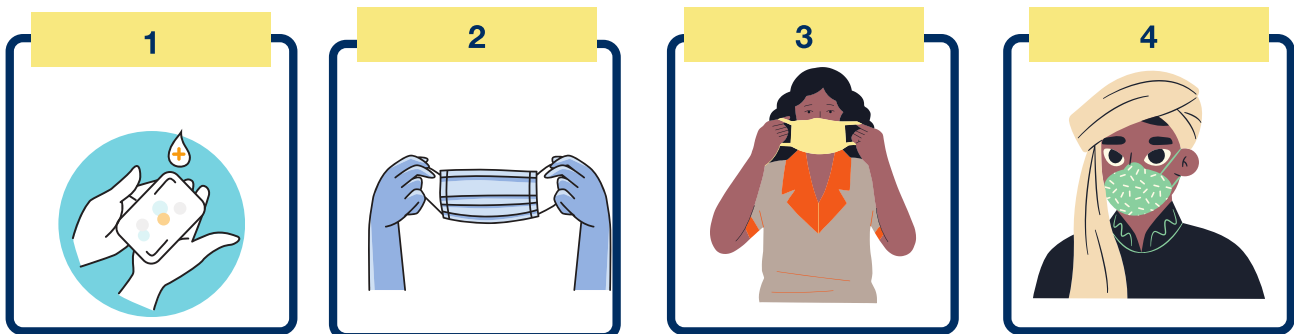
ANSWER

While face masks may cause a slight inconvenience, especially in Sudan because of the hot weather, they are the only barrier between us and the coronavirus. Here are the basics of how to wear a mask according to the World Health Organization:

- Clean your hands before you put your mask on, as well as before and after you take it off, and also after you touch it at any time.
- Make sure it covers both your nose, mouth and chin.
- When you take off a mask, store it in a clean plastic bag. You should wash a fabric mask on a daily basis.
- You should dispose a medical mask in a trash bin after one use.

MEDIUM RISK

## Wear a mask when in public or feeling sick



## RUMOUR #6

## PREVENTATIVE

"Masks should not be worn because they cause suffocation and then lead to death"

Female -Algouz

ANSWER

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that spreads through coughing, sneezing or touching contaminated surfaces. Wearing a mask is recommended by the Federal Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization to control the spread of the virus, especially in crowded places such as schools, mosques and markets. Wearing a mask, combined with physical distancing and regular handwashing can help prevent the spread of the virus since COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease. Even though it might feel uncomfortable to wear a mask for prolonged periods, it has not been proven that it could cause suffocation or death.

Spreading misinformation in our communities can have negative effects, as it causes people to become dismissive of health precautions that we should all follow to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

MEDIUM RISK

## RUMOUR #7

## TRANSMISSION

"Men can contract the virus from women"  
Female -Omdurman

"Corona affects white people more than black people"  
Female -Omdurman

Anyone can contract COVID-19, regardless of their race, ethnicity, beliefs, gender, or age. There is no evidence that suggests one gender or race is more prone to COVID-19 infections. Moreover, cases have been recorded all over the world.

There is no study that suggests certain groups of people have developed an immunity against COVID-19, in fact, the Sudanese Ministry of Health has recorded more than 23,000 cases among both men and women which proves that both genders can contract the virus and help spread it in their communities.

To protect ourselves and communities, we should follow the preventative measures set by the World Health Organization, such as physical distancing, washing your hands, and wearing face masks in public places.

To keep our communities safe, we should refrain from sharing such misinformation that could lead to people not following the recommended health measures.

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #8

## TREATMENT

"We're Muslims, protected by Allah, but babies cannot contract the disease because they're protected by angels"  
Female -Omdurman

"Constant Wudu kills Corona on your hands"  
Male -Khartoum

Wudu is a healthy Muslim practice that cleanses the body with just water for at least five times a day. However, COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that can only be removed effectively from our hands with soap and water. To get rid of the virus we should follow the Ministry of Health's advice of washing our hands with soapy water for 40 seconds.

As COVID-19 is a relatively new virus, health professionals are still learning how it affects babies. COVID-19 can be fatal in rare cases, mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions. However, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, few COVID-19 cases have been reported among children.

The best way to protect ourselves and our children is by following the preventative measures set by the World Health Organization, such as washing our hands with soap and water, disinfecting surfaces and keeping a distance of one meter from others.

LOW RISK

ANSWER

ANSWER

## RUMOUR #9

## SYMPTOMS

"Is it true that Corona comes with Malaria symptoms?" Male -Facebook

COVID-19 and malaria are two different diseases, and they spread differently. Malaria spreads through a mosquito bite, while COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets that we inhale through our nose or mouth.

COVID-19 and malaria have been incorrectly linked for several reasons. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, COVID-19 and Malaria share common symptoms such as fever. However, the Malaria fever reoccurs in cycles (comes and goes) while the COVID-19 fever does not. The most common COVID-19 symptoms are fever, dry cough and tiredness.

If you develop any of the above-mentioned COVID-19 symptoms please self-isolate, seek testing immediately and follow the preventative steps so you can keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

**LOW RISK**

## RUMOUR #10

## SYMPTOMS

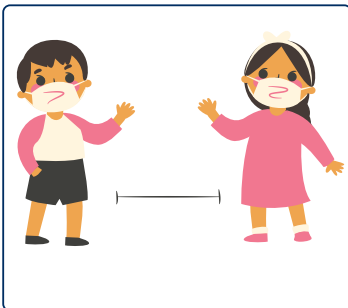
"Good evening. People who already have poor eyesight and have contracted Corona, did you feel that the virus was making causing fuzziness and uncomfortableness with light? Or this not part of corona?" Female -Facebook

"Is eye swelling a symptom of corona?" Female -Twitter

According to doctors, COVID-19 patients can get conjunctivitis 'pinkeye' which causes your eyes to swell, become red or itchy. Having conjunctivitis can cause your vision to become blurry.

**ANSWER** If you have 'pinkeye' it does not necessarily mean that you are infected with COVID-19 since it can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria, and allergies. But if you develop fever, cough, and shortness of breath seek medical help as those are common COVID-19 symptoms. We should refrain from seeking medical advice from social media, as misinformation can lead to negative results. Always seek medical help from professional health providers.

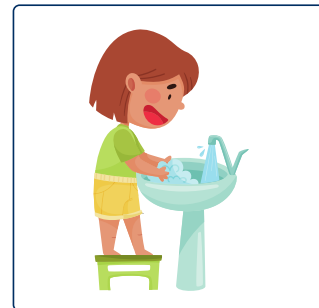
**LOW RISK**



**Keep a distance of two meter**



**Wear your mask in public spaces or if you feel sick**



**Wash your hands with soap and water for 40 seconds**

**The best way to avoid catching and spreading Covid-19 is to follow the preventive measures!**

## RUMOUR #11

## TESTING

"The most important thing is not to get tested, now you're fine, but as soon as you get tested, they'll tell you have a new disease" Male -Facebook

As testing centers for COVID-19 can be crowded, you should always plan and call in to see which times can be less crowded so you can reduce the risk of contracting the virus since it is a highly contagious virus and can spread in public and crowded areas. There is no evidence that suggests COVID-19 tests can get you infected with the virus, as new nasal swabs are provided for each person, kept in a new container and stored safely. In addition to that, all testing centers asks you to wear a mask, hand sanitize and to practice physical distancing in the facility to further reduce the risk of transmission.

Spreading misinformation could lead to people not following the recommended health measures.

HIGH RISK

## RUMOUR #12

## VACCINE

"This new vaccine changes the DNA" Male -Facebook

Vaccines are meant to help us in developing an immunity against the COVID-19 virus. Vaccines undergo rigorous testing for safety before being authorized for public use. The technology used in the COVID-19 vaccine has been studied for more than a decade.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 vaccine does not contain a live virus so there is no risk of an infection when getting vaccinated. In addition, it does not enter into human cells and does not affect or interact with the person's DNA.

HIGH RISK

## RUMOUR #13

## TRANSMISSION

"Doctor, I wish you could clarify to us after how many days is a person infected with corona not contagious. If he does not do another test" Female -Facebook

Testing negative for COVID-19 is the most accurate confirmation that you are no longer contagious. Since COVID-19 can easily spread and is transmitted through droplets from infected people when they cough or sneeze, we should always wear a mask when in public and maintain a distance of 1 meter from others. When experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms please self-quarantine to protect your family and community and seek medical help from your doctor.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, those that are less likely to be infectious and pass on the disease include:

- Asymptomatic people in most cases are no longer contagious after self-isolating for 10 days
- Symptomatic people should generally quarantine for 14 days or more, plus at least three days without symptoms
- Critically ill symptomatic people may need to quarantine for up to 20 days or more, plus at least three days without symptoms

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #14

## TRANSMISSION

"It is contagious by blood group and I heard that O+ can only be infected by someone who is also O+" Female -Facebook

As of today, there is no study from a verified source such as the World Health Organization, Federal Ministry of Health or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention that correlates blood types to a higher risk of infection among a certain group of people who share the same blood type. However, the known risk factors for COVID-9 mortality are age, smoking, hypertension, diabetes, and chronic cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Keep up to date on COVID-19 through trusted sources such as the [World Health Organization MythBusters](#) webpage.

**MEDIUM RISK**

## RUMOUR #15

## TREATMENT

"Studies have shown that Dexamethasone is the most effective treatment for those in need of oxygen, and the dose is 6 mg for a period of ten days. If you are unable to find it in Sudan, the alternative is prednisolone 40 mg for a few days" Male -Twitter

You should not self-medicate or rely on social media for medical advice as it could lead to adverse effects. Dexamethasone is a type of medication that is used to treat many conditions, such as skin diseases, severe allergies, and asthma. According to the World Health Organization, Dexamethasone should only be administered by a health professional on gravely ill COVID-19 patients.

The [World Health Organization](#) also advises against the use of Dexamethasone in the treatment of patients with non-severe COVID-19. If you or anyone you know show severe symptoms of COVID-19, it is best to contact your doctor.

**HIGH RISK**

## RUMOUR #16

## TRANSMISSION

"I have no idea of Corona and we don't have it because it did not come to us" Male -Mayo

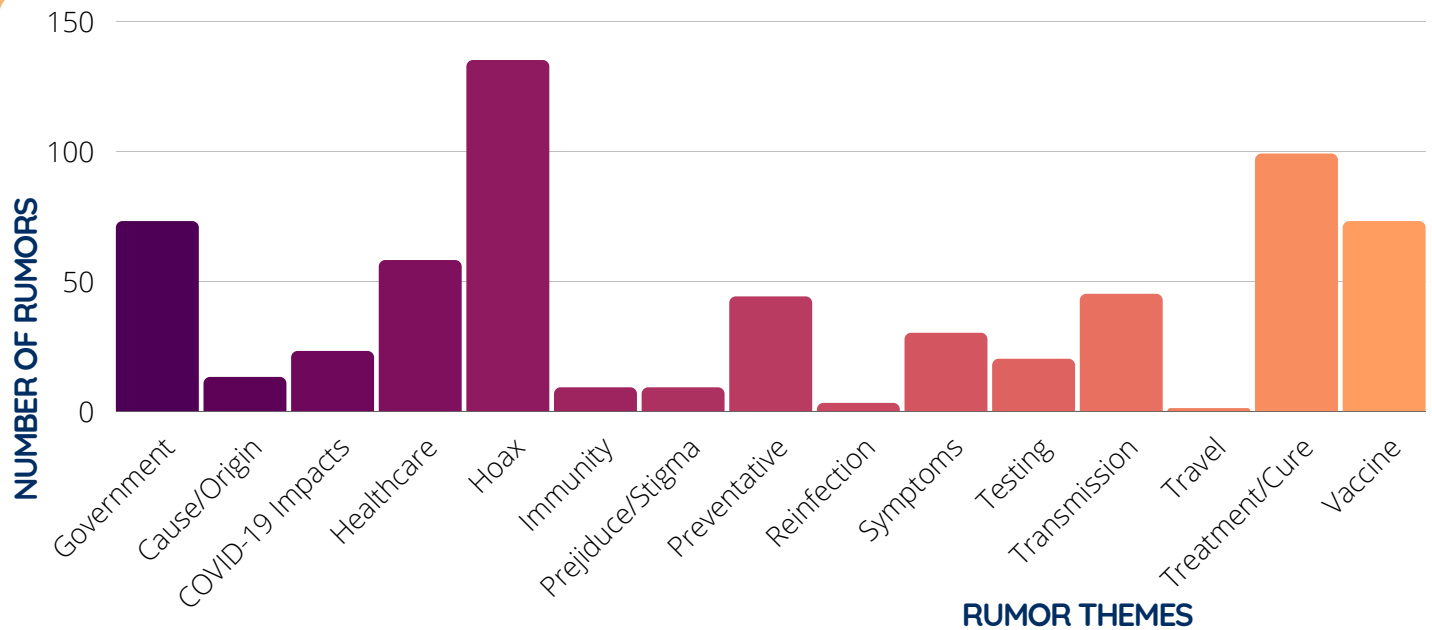
"We're scared of people from Khartoum because they have Corona, whenever we're going to Khartoum, we wear our masks." Male -Mayo

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that can spread very quickly and easily between people regardless of where they live. It can spread through droplets when people cough, sneeze or get in touch with an infected person. According to the [Ministry of Health](#), wearing a mask is helpful when combined with physical distancing and washing our hands regularly with soap and water for 40 seconds.

It is hard to know how widely the virus is spreading globally, especially in Africa because of the limited testing capacity due to underfunded health systems, which make it hard to track how far COVID-19 is spreading.

**LOW RISK**

## TOP RUMOR THEMES



## HOW TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE COVID-19?



Have you been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed positive with COVID-19?

**Yes**

Do you have any symptoms such as fever, cough, or a sore throat?

**Yes**

Request a PCR test. Did the test show a positive result?

**Yes**

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine or the recommended treatment by a licensed doctor based on the severity of the symptoms

**NO**

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine and be vigilant of symptoms

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine and be vigilant of symptoms

**NO**

Please note if you experience any symptoms, seek testing. Otherwise, follow the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health

Please follow the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health

