Xperia – Medicall Healthcare: Focus on the coronavirus (COVID-19)

What is the coronavirus (COVID-19)? COVID-19 forms part of a group of viruses that cause respiratory tract infections that are mostly harmless, such as some cases of the common cold, though rarer forms of the coronavirus, such as SARS, MERS and COVID-19, are more dangerous.

Who is at risk? Those most at risk of contracting COVID-19 include those who have existing heart or lung diseases, people with weakened immune systems, e.g. people with HIV, TB, diabetes or cancer, as well as infants, young children and older people.

What are the symptoms? Patients who have contracted COVID-19 experience symptoms such as fever, shortness of breath and coughing. Some may have sore throat and fatigue. COVID-19 can also cause bronchitis and pneumonia, an infection that causes inflammation in the air sacs in the lungs that can cause them to fill with fluid. The incubation period (the period in which a person is infected with COVID-19 and in which symptoms appear for the first time) is between one and fourteen days. Most people start showing symptoms about five days after becoming infected.

What you can do to protect yourself Most importantly: DON'T PANIC. Your best form of protection, and preventing that you are infected with COVID-19, is a strong immune system. It is important to take care of yourself and to stay healthy.

To protect yourself and your family, follow these simple rules:

- ❖ Wash your hands often and in the proper way. Always use soap and rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Make sure you wash and rub the entire surface of your hands, including the back of your hands.
- ❖ Avoid large crowds. Keep your distance. Aim to keep at least 1 metre between yourself and someone who is coughing or sneezing. It is best to avoid touching people or shaking hands.
- ❖ Avoid touching your face. The average person touches their face around 23 times per hour. Germs on your hands are easily transferred into your body via the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth.
- ❖ Practice respiratory hygiene. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- ❖ We also advise you to make use of your flu vaccination benefit that forms part of your day-to-day benefits- contact your network GP, this will ensure that you have added protection against most flu viruses.
- ❖ Strengthening your immune system to protect yourself from the flu virus is important. You can go for one flu vaccination per year.

What to do if you suspect you might have been infected with COVID-19

Check your symptoms, do you have at least one of the following symptoms?

- ❖ A cough
- ❖ A sore throat
- ❖ Shortness of breath
- ❖ A fever > 38°C
- ❖ In the past 14 days prior to showing any of these symptoms, were you in close contact with a person who has, or is suspected of having COVID-19?
- ❖ or Have you recently travelled to Mainland China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Iran, Hong Kong, Italy, Vietnam and Taiwan or any newly identified countries?
- ❖ or Have you worked in, or visited a healthcare facility where patients with COVID-19 infections were being treated?
- ❖ or Have you recently been admitted with severe pneumonia of unknown etiology?

What happens if I need to go for a COVID-19 screening test?

You can also call the NICD (National Institute for Communicable Diseases) on 0800 029 999. The NICD can provide you with information about where your nearest testing facility is and can explain the process that needs to be followed if you suspect you have COVID-19. If you have your testing done via the NICD, you do not need to pay for the tests.