



Coronavirus: a global emergency?

Level B1

1 Marzo 2020

It's all over the news: the Coronavirus epidemic is spreading. Is it a true, global threat, or are we all overreacting? First some facts.

The Coronavirus was first detected in the city of Wuhan, China, a few months ago. Since then it has spread to fifty countries. The Coronavirus produces a disease called Covid-19, which is very similar to the ordinary flu, with symptoms such as fever, coughing and sneezing. Although the flu can also be deadly, Covid-19 is more dangerous. So far some 82,000 people have caught it, and nearly 3,000 died. It must be noted that most of its victims were people already in poor health. In other words, a healthy person who contracts the virus will most likely recover from it. Indeed, some 80% of infected people report mild or no symptoms at all.



Reactions around the world

One of the problems of the Coronavirus is that, like the viruses that cause the flu, it can spread quickly, through the air, person to person. Sometimes it's hard to detect, just because its effects are so similar to those of the flu. The ways to deal with this epidemic vary around the world. Public statements go from that of US president Donald Trump who claimed that the danger to Americans "remains very low," to Australian prime minister Scott Morrison who said that the risk of a pandemic was "very much upon us." In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that the government is planning for "all eventualities" if the number of

Coronavirus cases rise. For sure, many countries are taking measures against the spread of the virus, such as quarantining people from affected areas, cancelling public events or shutting down schools.

What needs to be done

These measures cannot stop the virus, but they are useful in slowing the contagion. This is very important because it allows the health care systems to deal with this emergency. There are not enough hospitals if too many people get sick at the same time. Correct information is also very important. For example, the UK is launching a mass public information campaign. Informing the public with solid science and good advice is a way to prevent mass panic and irrational behaviour. It is a problem, for example, if people hoard goods, medicines and surgical masks. It is more helpful, as the World Health Organization recommends, to take [simple precautions](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/25/how-to-protect-yourself-from-coronavirus) [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/25/how-to-protect-yourself-from-coronavirus] to reduce exposure and transmission such as avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth and washing your hands regularly.

Side effects

What cannot be overlooked about the Coronavirus outbreak are its side effects. What seems to be spreading faster than the virus is the fear of it. Some countries have stopped traveling to and trading with China and other countries affected by the virus. As a consequence, many businesses that rely on tourism or international trade are in trouble. Some analysts warn that the [Coronavirus could trigger a new financial crisis](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/27/coronavirus-could-trigger-damage-on-scale-of-2008-financial-crisis-covid-19) [https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/27/coronavirus-could-trigger-damage-on-scale-of-2008-financial-crisis-covid-19]. This irrational fear is also producing another, deadly virus: racism. In many places around the world Chinese people are accused of spreading the disease. There are also many reported cases of discrimination towards infected individuals. Finally, it should be noted that the Coronavirus is distracting people from other far more deadly problems, such as pollution, climate change and international conflicts. It's time to face the Coronavirus epidemic with rationality and the right perspective.

Useful links

1) *How can you protect yourself from the Coronavirus? Here is some advice from the World Health Organization:*

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

[https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019]

2) *Here is some more advice from the British government:*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public]

3) *Facts or fiction? Find out the myths about the virus you shouldn't believe:*

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/2019-novel-coronavirus-myth-versus-fact>

[https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/2019-novel-coronavirus-myth-versus-fact]

4) *This map keeps track of the spread of the Coronavirus:*

COMPREHENSION

1) Read the article and complete the sentences with the right alternative.

1. The Coronavirus

- a. first appeared in China.
- b. was created in Wuhan.
- c. produces the flu.

2. Covid-19 is

- a. not as dangerous as the flu.
- b. caused by sneezing and coughing.
- c. very similar to the flu.

3. The Coronavirus can be very dangerous

- a. for people who are already weak and sick.
- b. for healthy people.
- c. for 80% of infected individuals.

4. The Coronavirus

- a. spreads slowly.
- b. is very contagious.
- c. is caused by Covid-19.

5. President Trump was

- a. very worried about the Coronavirus.
- b. more optimistic than prime minister Morrison.
- c. more pessimistic than prime minister Morrison.

6. Many countries are taking measures

- a. to stop the virus.
- b. to build more hospitals.
- c. to slow down the spread of the virus.

7. The UK government is inviting people to

- a. hoard medicines and surgical masks.
- b. act rationally.
- c. listen to the World Health Organization.

8. The fear of the Coronavirus is having a negative impact on

- a. international relations.
- b. the World Health Organization.
- c. China alone.

9. The Coronavirus epidemic is dangerous also because

- a. it's making many people fearful, irrational and racist.
- b. it has produced a new financial crisis.
- c. many people are cancelling their trips to China.

10. Problems such as pollution and climate change

- a. produce fewer casualties than the Coronavirus.
- b. are far less important than the Coronavirus epidemic.
- c. are more dangerous than the Coronavirus.

VOCABULARY

2) Complete the sentences with the following words. Put the verbs and nouns in the right form, if necessary.

outbreak * to overreact * to recover * pandemic * epidemic * to quarantine * to hoard * side

effect * to deal with * deadly

1. An _____ happens when a disease spreads quickly and unexpectedly within a certain population.
2. The sudden spread of a disease can also be called an _____.
3. A _____, instead, is when a new disease spreads quickly all over the world.
4. A lot of people _____ medicines: they are buying lots of them and hiding them away.
5. There are many diseases that are more _____ than the Coronavirus.
6. An undesirable secondary effect of a medicine, or of an action, is called a _____.
7. People infected with the Coronavirus are _____, which means that they are isolated from the rest of the population.
8. I can't _____ all these negative news, they're making me really anxious.
9. Please look at the facts. You have to act rationally, not _____.
10. I no longer have the flu and I feel great - I have _____ completely.

GRAMMAR - Making questions

3) Look at the answers below. Write the right question for every answer.

1. _____

No, the Corona virus is more dangerous than the flu.

2. _____

So far 82,000 people have caught the Coronavirus.

3. _____

The percentage of infected people who report mild or no symptoms at all is 80%.

4. _____

Yes, president Donald Trump said that the danger to Americans remains very low.

5. _____

British prime minister Johnson said that the government is planning for "all eventualities."

6. _____

According to the World Health Organization, people should take precautions such as

washing hands
regularly.

7. _____

Yes, the government shut down the schools to slow down the spreading of the disease.

8. _____

Some of the side effects of the Coronavirus epidemic are irrational fear and racism.

9. _____

Tourism in China and other countries is in trouble because many tourists no longer want to spend their holidays there.

10. _____

Yes, we can stop talking about the Coronavirus.

SHORT ESSAY

4) What's your opinion on the Coronavirus? Is it a true, global threat, or are we all overreacting? Write a text on the topic (60-80 words) or discuss with your classmates.

5) Do you think there are other problems around you more dangerous than the Coronavirus? Describe in a text (60-80 words) or discuss with your classmates.

(Carlo Dellonte)

(Image credits: Pixabay [<https://pixabay.com/it/photos/epidemic-wuhan-s-virus-quarantine-4888794/>] , Pixabay [<https://pixabay.com/it/illustrations/virus-coronavirus-corona-virus-blu-4835301/>])

TAG Boris Johnson, coronavirus, COVID-19, Donald Trump, flu, Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-Being, Goal 4 - Quality Education, Obiettivo 3 - Salute e benessere, Obiettivo 4 - Istruzione di qualità, World Health Organization