



# MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

## COVID-19 UPDATE

As of Monday 16 March, there were no COVID-19 positive cases in Fiji.

The Fijian Ministry of Health and Medical Services says 46 tests have now been done on suspected COVID-19 cases in Fiji – all have returned a negative result. 27 of these tests were conducted locally with the opening of new facilities at the Fiji Centre for Disease Control in Suva last week.

Finding cases early and isolating them quickly is key to containing this disease. As the symptoms of COVID-19 are very similar to many other respiratory illnesses (including the common cold and influenza) it is expected that with time the Ministry will investigate more persons with relevant travel history and symptoms related to COVID-19.

The WHO says there are now at least 153,648 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 5746 deaths across 146 countries or territories worldwide. A coordinated national effort is the best way to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected to limit the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on Fiji.

Our travel restrictions on Italy, Iran, South Korea and mainland China remain in full effect, as do the stringent screening measures at our international airports. We plan to install thermal scanners at our international airports. With new measures announced by the Hon Prime Minister, cruise ships are banned from berthing anywhere in Fiji, international events are now not be allowed in Fiji and local events are closed to all guests coming in from overseas.

Ministers, civil servants, Permanent Secretaries and staff of statutory bodies will be restricted from travelling overseas barring exceptionally critical circumstances. We also highly discourage all Fijians from travelling overseas. If you do choose to travel anywhere outside of Fiji, you may be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon your return to Fiji, even if you are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19. This, of course, is already mandated for Fijians arriving home from nations on our restricted travel list.

These measures will all be subject to review as the global situation evolves.

We already have secure isolation facilities up and running throughout Fiji, with the Central Division being served by Navua Hospital, the Western Division served by the Nadi Hospital, and Labasa Hospital serving the Northern Division. As we monitor the situation, more isolation units will be established as the need arises in accordance with our expansion plan.

While we may not yet have a case, now is the time to begin changing the ways we go about our day-to-day lives to strengthen our resilience to an outbreak.

The single most important thing anyone can do is to wash your hands with soap and water on a regular basis. The combination of soap and water kills COVID-19 dead in its tracks. Thorough and effective handwashing takes 20 seconds – and with this simple act, you may very well be saving a life. Fijians also need to break the habit of shaking hands, hugging and sharing takis and bilos. Instead, simply share a “*bula*” from a safe distance and limit in-person contact as much as possible.

Along with taking extra steps to ensure hygiene such as regular handwashing and not touching your face, the MHMS urges the public not to share rumours and misinformation. We will tell you as soon as possible once we have a confirmed case. Use credible sources such as the MHMS website (<http://www.health.gov.fj/>) or official Facebook page, or the WHO website ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)).

If you have been to a COVID-19 affected country in the last 14 days and develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing immediately contact one of the numbers listed below. If you need to see a doctor please call ahead, using the following phone numbers, before visiting to reduce the risk of infecting other patients.

- Central 2219905
- Eastern 2219906
- Western 2219907
- Northern 2219908