



(Left) Practical steps to protect ourselves include keeping frequently touched surfaces clean in our home and our Kingdom Hall; (Center) In some affected areas, publishers may choose to participate in alternative forms of the ministry, such as telephone witnessing; (Right) In areas where there is an outbreak, based on local circumstances, the elders may be able to provide access to recorded meetings

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GLOBAL NEWS

## Coronavirus Update and Response

The world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses is closely monitoring the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (known as COVID-19). We know from Bible prophecy that pestilence is a notable feature of the last days. ([Luke 21:11](#)) When there is an outbreak of disease, it is wise to take practical measures to protect ourselves as well as others.—[Proverbs 22:3](#).

Some may wonder how our brothers and sisters are doing in the affected areas. The outbreak of COVID-19 has significantly impacted the branch offices and congregations in Italy, Japan, South Korea, and other countries. In some cases, the branch office has had to cancel tours and visits from outside guests. In other cases, the government has restricted large public gatherings, which has required the branch to cancel circuit assemblies. Additionally, congregations have had to adjust arrangements for the ministry and congregation meetings in some areas. Despite these challenges, our brothers continue to build themselves up spiritually and encourage one another.—[Jude 20, 21](#).

In these situations, our brothers have found the principles below to be helpful. These points may also assist you and your family if you are faced with an outbreak of disease in your area.

- **Do Not Panic.** While it is good to be alert to epidemics and to take reasonable precautions, the response should be a measured approach based on facts, not on fear.—[Proverbs 14:15; Isaiah 30:15](#).
- **Follow Government Recommendations and Directives.** Local authorities often implement precautions or restrictions for public health. It is good to keep informed and comply with the government's directives.—[Romans 13:1](#).
- **Promote Good Hygiene.** It is essential to wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. We should also keep frequently touched surfaces clean in our home and at our Kingdom Hall. Additionally, medical experts discourage shaking hands in such situations, as this could continue the spread of disease. Regarding the coronavirus, the World Health Organization has provided additional [advice for the public](#).
- **Show Love to Others.** While we all know the importance of attending Christian meetings and participating in the public ministry, if you are sick, it is best to stay home to avoid infecting others. This shows brotherly love

and protects our brothers and sisters and our non-Witness neighbors.—  
Matthew 22:39.

- **Follow Temporary Adjustments to Congregation Arrangements.** In areas where there is an outbreak of disease, it may be necessary for the branch office to temporarily cancel congregation meetings, assemblies, and other theocratic events. This has been the case in some areas where the COVID-19 virus has hit the hardest, such as in certain regions of Italy, Japan, and South Korea. Based on local circumstances, the elders may be able to provide access to recorded meetings, which publishers can watch from home. Publishers may be able to participate in the ministry through phone calls, text messages, e-mails, or letters.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN OUR PUBLICATIONS

Below is a selection of references with helpful principles for disease prevention.

- "Protect Yourself From Disease" *Awake!* No. 6 2016, pages 4-6
- "Ways to Improve Your Health" *Awake!* June 2015, pages 2-7
- "You Can Improve Your Health: Key 4—Protect Your Health" *Awake!* March 2011, page 7