

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

Position Statement on Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 by Pre-symptomatic and Asymptomatic Individuals

Over the past weeks, there has been wide media attention on the risk of transmission of the novel coronavirus [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)] by asymptomatic individuals. This situation has also been extensively discussed on various platforms globally. The purpose of this position statement is for the Africa Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to clarify the situation of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 by pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic Individuals.

Africa CDC would like to provide clarity as follows:

- That there is a difference between pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic:
 - Pre-symptomatic is an individual for whom the SARS-CoV-2 is detected before they develop any symptoms^{i-iv}; and
 - Asymptomatic is an individual for whom SARS-CoV-2 is detected but they do not develop any known symptoms^{v-vii}.
- That pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals can and do transmit SARS-CoV-2 and indeed are significant drivers of this pandemic^{viii-x}.
- Asymptomatic individuals are of public health importance in this pandemic. As such, we need to actively identify and isolate all asymptomatic individuals to slow down community transmission of SARS-CoV-2.
- By identifying asymptomatic individuals in the society, the number of active cases are expected to increase and this may provide a more accurate picture of the burden of disease and enable adequate planning for preparedness and response to COVID-19.

While appreciating these facts, Africa CDC re-affirms the following recommendations:



a. Physical distancing;



b. Appropriate wearing of face masks where physical distancing is a challenge;



c. Effective use of personal protective equipment by healthcare workers in clinical settings;



d. Expanded laboratory testing including targeted use of rapid tests for surveillance;



e. Effective and active contact tracing; and



f. Quarantining and/or isolation of individuals as appropriate and as per the approved guidelines.

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