

# Covid-19 | Contents

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# Overview | Coronaviruses

## What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a broad family of viruses that cause varying illnesses – from the common cold, to severe MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). They are zoonotic in nature, transmitted between animals and people. The MERS outbreak was traced back to camels, while the SARS outbreak of 2002-03 began in bats and spread to palm civets before infecting people. Zoonotic viruses can be lethal as humans lack pre-existing immunity to them.

There are many coronaviruses that infect animals that have not yet infected humans. A novel coronavirus is one that has not previously been known to infect humans. **SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus, causing the disease Covid-19.**

## Symptoms of infection

Common signs of coronavirus infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Severe cases can result in pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

## How contagious are coronaviruses?

It very much depends on the viral strain – there are seven (including the novel strain) known to infect humans. Quarantining affected people was effective in controlling the spread of SARS. MERS failed to adapt quickly to humans and as a result transmission rates were relatively low, with the strain eventually petering out. While research and statistics are still in the early stages, SARS-CoV-2's reproduction number (the average number of people that any individual with the virus will infect) is estimated to be between 1.8 and 3.3. To stop an epidemic, the number needs to be below 1.

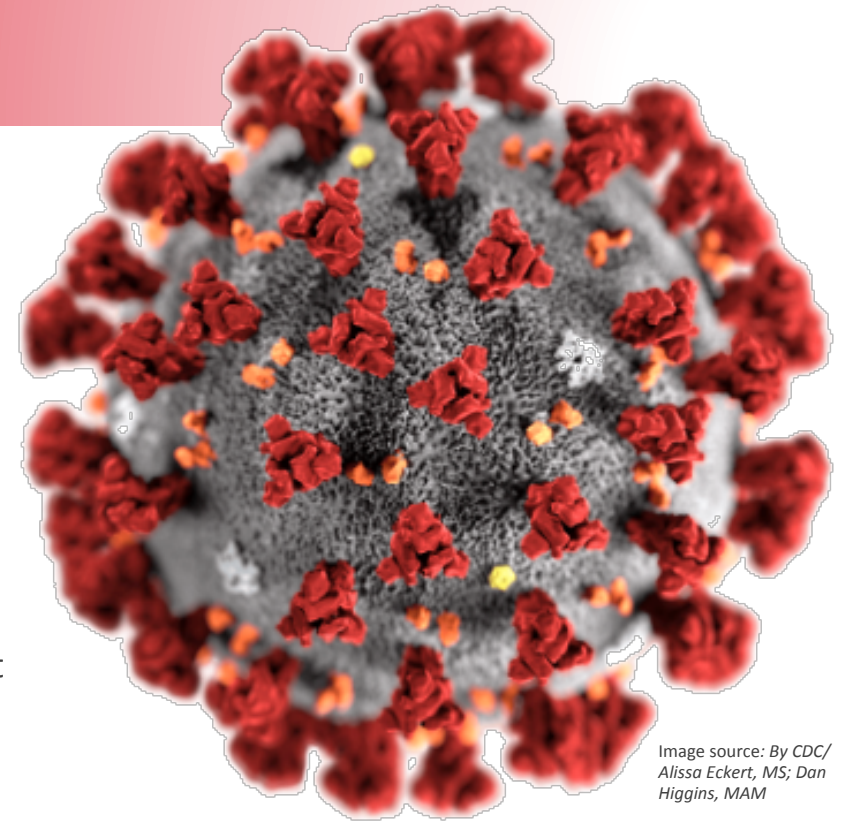


Image source: By CDC/  
Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan  
Higgins, MAM

# CHC Brand Response | BioLife (Mega Lifesciences)

Malaysian vitamin line Bio-Life claims on website: **“Coronavirus: Protect yourself with vitamin C & D from the current infectious outbreak”**. Brand clearly advocating that supplement use can protect consumers against the current coronavirus.



The screenshot shows the Bio-Life website with a green header containing the logo and navigation links: Home, Products, Health Tips, Interactive, and WHAT'S NEW. The main banner features a world map with red and blue virus icons, a woman wearing a face mask, and the text "COVID-19" on the right side. Below the banner, there is a button labeled "ENG" and a headline: "Coronavirus: Protect yourself with vitamin C & D from the current infectious outbreak".

<https://www.biolife.com.my/health-tips/general-health/coronavirus-protect-yourself-with-vitamin-c-d-from-the-current-infectious-outbreak>



The screenshot shows the Bio-Life website with a green header containing the logo and navigation links: Home, Products, Health Tips, Interactive, and WHAT'S NEW. The main banner features a woman wearing a face mask, surrounded by virus icons, and the text "Strengthen Your Immune System from Coronavirus". Below the banner, there is a button labeled "KNOW MORE >".



The graphic features a shield-shaped frame containing the text "Vitamin C as your IMMUNE PROTECTOR" and a button labeled "KNOW MORE >". Below the shield, there are several oranges and orange slices.

# CHC Category Impact | TCM

## Government crackdown on products advertised as a prevention or cure for the virus

Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCMs) have already proven popular with Chinese consumers anxious about contracting Covid-19, in part owing to information spread by the media.



The state-run Xinhua news agency released a report advocating the use of **Shuanghuanglian oral liquid**, (a mixture of honeysuckle, Chinese skullcap, and forsythia) which is **claimed to relieve symptoms such as fever, cough and sore throat**. The statements came following a study supposedly conducted by two institutions (the Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica and the Wuhan Institute of Virology) which **claimed that the liquid could be used to inhibit the virus**.

The story generated scepticism, with the **popular medical site dxy.cn later debunking the claim**, but this did not stop panic buying, with the product selling out across pharmacies.

During SARS, with no known cure, many consumers turned to traditional remedies. According to local sources, purchases of TCM rose, with TCMs formulated to treat / suppress viruses or disinfect the mouth particularly successful, achieving growth of >35%.

The first half of 2003 saw massive growth in sales of **kangbingdu koufuye – “antiviral oral liquid”** – a TCM formula which consists of a collection of herbal extracts believed to strengthen the immune system.

However, industry sources report that while local authorities were initially tolerant, after a while some administrators began to worry that consumers might rely too heavily on such remedies, or regard them as a “cure”, and so banned advertising for kangbingdu koufuye.

The response of the authorities appears to be similar this time around: adverts for TCM are banned from making claims to prevent or cure Covid-19.



# Distribution | Supply chain disruption

## India's role in drug production

**India, which imports around 84% of its APIs from China, will be hit hard by disruptions in the supply chain.** And since the country produces 20% of the world's drugs by volume, this will have a knock on effect around the globe.

In terms of OTCs, this largely affects ibuprofen, paracetamol and vitamin products (including vitamins B12, B1, B6, C, and E), where the vast majority of raw materials are imported from China.

The pharmaceutical industry is also facing rising prices of raw material. According to data from the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil), the cost of paracetamol has gone up from Rs 250-300 per kg to 400-450 per kg and the prices of vitamins have increased by 40-50%.

In anticipation of China's national leave for Lunar New Year, Indian companies stocked up on raw materials, though these stocks are not likely to last if disruptions continue in the long term.

According to a report by Al Jazeera on February 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, the pharmaceuticals industry is concerned that stocks of active ingredients for drugs such as paracetamol and ibuprofen could last for 15 days and two to three months for other drugs.

The shortages have led to the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) committee contemplating restricting the export of certain drugs (including vitamins).



*Illustration: UltraConsultants*