

# Water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for COVID-19

Technical Brief  
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## 1.0 Introduction and background

In late 2019, an acute respiratory disease, known as COVID-19, emerged. The pathogen responsible for COVID-19 is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2, also referred to as the COVID-19 virus), a member of the coronavirus family. In response to the growing spread of COVID-19, WHO has published a number of technical guidance documents on specific topics, including infection prevention and control (IPC). These recent documents are available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/infection-prevention-and-control>.

This Technical Brief supplement these IPC documents by referring to and summarizing WHO guidance on water, sanitation and health care waste which is relevant for viruses (including coronaviruses). This Technical Brief is written in particular for water and sanitation practitioners and providers. It is also for health care providers who want to know more about water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) risks and practices.

Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic conditions play an essential role in protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 outbreak. Good and consistently applied WASH and waste management practices, in communities, homes, schools, marketplaces and health care facilities will further help to prevent human-to-human transmission of COVID-19.

The most important information concerning WASH and COVID-19 are:

- **Frequent and proper hand hygiene is one of the most important prevention measures for COVID-19.** WASH practitioners should work to enable more frequent and regular hand hygiene through improved facilities and proven behaviour change techniques.
- **Existing WHO guidance on safe management of drinking-water and sanitation apply to COVID-19.** Extra measures are not needed. Disinfection, in particular, will facilitate more rapid die-off of COVID-19 virus.
- **Many co-benefits will be realized by safely managing water and sanitation services and applying good hygiene practices.** Such efforts will prevent many other infectious diseases, which cause millions of deaths each year.