

# Q & A on COVID-19:

## Prevention

### **5. Are face masks effective in protecting against COVID-19?**

If you are infected, the use of surgical face masks may reduce the risk of you infecting other people. On the other hand there is *no evidence* that face masks will effectively prevent you from becoming infected with the virus. In fact, it is possible that the use of face masks may even increase the risk of infection due to a false sense of security and increased contact between hands, mouth and eyes while wearing them. The inappropriate use of masks also may increase the risk of infection.

### **6. Is there a vaccine against the virus?**

There are currently no vaccines against human coronaviruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19. This is why it is very important to prevent infection and to take measures to contain further spread of the virus.

### **7. How long will it take to develop a vaccine?**

The development of vaccines take time. Several pharmaceutical companies and research laboratories are working on vaccine candidates. It will, however, take

many months or even years before any vaccine can be widely used, as it needs to undergo extensive testing in clinical trials to determine its safety and efficacy. These clinical trials are an essential precursor to regulatory approval and usually take place in three phases. The first, involving a few dozen healthy volunteers, tests the vaccine for safety, monitoring for adverse effects. The second, involving several hundred people, usually in a part of the world badly affected by the disease, looks at how effective the vaccine is in the field, and the third does the same in several thousand people.

## **8. Am I protected against COVID-19 if I had the influenza vaccine this year?**

Influenza and the virus that causes COVID-19 are two very different viruses and the seasonal influenza vaccine will not protect against COVID-19.