What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that was recently declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 cases have been identified in Ethiopia; now is a critical time to stop the disease from spreading. Cases have been reported from all continents but Antarctica and people from all walks of life have been infected with the virus.

How does the disease spread?

The virus can spread when people are in close contact with one another, through coughs and sneezes. A person can also get the virus by touching surfaces where the virus is, and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe and potentially death. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure; however, not everyone with COVID-19 will develop symptoms or feel unwell. Both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals with COVID-19 can transmit the virus. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- Fever (not necessarily a high fever)
- Dry cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Weakness or muscular pain
- Loss of sense of taste or smell
- Chills
- New onset of diarrhea
- New onset of nausea or vomiting

If you are sick with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, call 8335 or 952 with COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself and your family is through prevention.

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and avoid touching your face.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially those who have COVID-19 symptoms.
- If you suspect you have COVID-19, stay home and call 8335 or 952 for advice.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or a tissue instead of your hand.
- Clean, disinfect, and avoid touching surfaces that are frequently touched like door knobs, light switches, and hand rails to prevent the spread of the virus. Effective disinfectants include: Diluting household bleach, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, other common household cleaners such as Dettol.

COVID-19 vaccine development is underway, but not yet available. Scientists all over the world are working on developing an effective vaccine with promising tests being conducted. In the meantime, the prevention methods mentioned above such as hand-washing and social distancing, are the most effective ways to manage the spread of COVID-19.

If everyone does their part, we can overcome COVID-19. For more information, please call 8335 or 952.