

**“Wash your hands of misinformation”
Secretary of Health urges people to practise
information hygiene**

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Health officials around the world are fighting back against a rising COVID-19 'infodemic' being spread on social media.

Here in the Cook Islands, Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health, says people need to check the facts before they share COVID-19 stories and posts.

The COVID-19 Act 2020 makes it an offence to publish false information. Individuals found to be in breach of the new law face up to 12 months in prison and fines of up to \$10,000, while businesses will be subject to fines of up to \$200,000 if convicted.

“Wash your hands of misinformation,” says Secretary of Health Dr Josephine Aumea Herman.

“Wall-to-wall COVID-19 coverage has made it hard for some people to sift through fact from fiction. It is important that you check the facts at [covid19.gov.ck](https://www.covid19.gov.ck) – that is your number one source for factual information based on scientific evidence, provided by the country’s public health professionals and trained emergency response experts,” she says. Other important information sources include the World Health Organisation (www.who.int) and the New Zealand Ministry of Health (www.health.govt.nz).

Te Marae Ora has been working closely with local television, radio and newspapers to ensure accurate and timely information is shared across the nation’s news outlets.

“The stakes couldn’t be higher. Misinformation could cost lives. Social media is a mixed blessing – it’s fantastic at sharing important public health messages and helps us keep connected. But it can also play a part in spreading inaccurate and dangerous information. I’m sure most people are motivated by good intentions when they hit share, but if you truly want to help others avoid COVID-19, you should only rely on trusted sources. Exercise information hygiene.”

Visit www.covid19.gov.ck for up to date information.

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