



This week's big news



A woman in the locked down city of Milan, Italy.

ROBOT TO THE RESCUE

Children at a school in Taiwan have built a Lego robot that sprays disinfectant on students' hands, to keep them healthy.

What's it like in Italy?



Helena, aged 12.

One of our UK readers, Helena, interviewed her friends Pepe, 13, and Emilia, 11, who live in Rome, Italy. Their school is now closed until

3 April. They say that the one positive about having to stay at home is that they've been able to have a lie-in in the mornings. They've been given homework to do online, but sports clubs and music lessons have been cancelled. Cinemas, libraries and museums have all had to close. Although they miss their friends and say that it's sometimes "boring" to have to stay at home, they know that it's important to stick to the rules. "It is better that we don't see our friends until it's ok to do so," they say.

Italy shuts down to try and stop spread of coronavirus

The Italian government has placed the whole of Italy in quarantine, which means people must stay at home and limit their contact with others. The announcement was made on 9 March as part of Italy's efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus that causes the disease known as Covid-19.

What is Covid-19?

The Covid-19 disease is caused by a new type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). It was discovered in humans in Wuhan, China, at the end of last year. Symptoms of Covid-19 include breathing difficulties, a sore throat and a high temperature. If a person has these symptoms, it does not mean they have Covid-19 – there are many types of coronavirus, including one that causes the common cold.

What has the Italian government done?

Italy has banned its 60 million people from travelling around the country and has asked them to stay at home. The government has closed cinemas and museums and banned public gatherings, including sporting events. These measures will last until at least 3 April. Shops and restaurants are open but people have been told to stay at least one metre apart.

Why is Italy under lockdown?

On 9 March, the number of people in Italy infected by the coronavirus rose sharply to more than 9,000. At the same time, the number of people who had died increased to 463. "We are facing a national emergency," said the Italian prime minister, Giuseppe Conte. By 11 March, there were 10,149 coronavirus cases and 631 deaths.

What about Italian schools?

All schools and universities have been shut. Edoardo Diletti, a student, told the *BBC* he was enjoying being off school and understood it was necessary to stop young people from getting sick. In Lombardy, in north Italy, headteacher Amanda Ferrario said lessons would be carried out on the internet. Some parents said they were worried how they were going to entertain their children while they were at home.

How many people are infected globally?

Across the world, there are more than 121,000 known cases of Covid-19. More than 4,300 people have died, around 73% of them in China. Many of those who have died were in poor health already – most people who catch it make a full recovery.

What about the UK?

In the UK, there are 456 confirmed cases and there have been six deaths. On 9 March, the UK Government held an emergency meeting. It said it had a plan to deal with a widespread outbreak of the coronavirus – including closing schools, making people work from home and banning all large gatherings. However, the Government decided it was not yet time to introduce these plans. It said sporting events would go ahead and schools would stay open.

All figures and information were correct at the time *The Week Junior* went to press on 11 March.

Good to know

Covid-19 is spread via cough and sneeze droplets. Stay healthy by touching your mouth, nose or face as little as possible. Wash your hands with soap and water often, for 20 seconds. If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve, not your hands. Put the tissue in the bin and then wash your hands or use hand sanitiser.

Italy shuts down to try and stop spread of coronavirus

Hold a debate

Read the article and then try the following activities...

Schools in Italy have been closed in an attempt to stop the spread of coronavirus. They are now trying to do their teaching over the internet. Isn't it time to make all learning an online activity, virus or no virus? The technology is already available and it would be cheaper than having to keep schools open, even if the government paid for all the equipment. Pupils could then learn without being disrupted by each other and, of course, it would reduce the spread of germs. Or is it important for children to gather together to learn? Surely, we learn things at school that go far beyond the subjects we are taught, like how to get along with others, for example. Anyway, wouldn't that mean that every child would need an adult to supervise them, meaning they can't go out to work. What do you think?

Writing challenge!

Choose one of the following writing warm-ups.

1 Write a set of instructions, letting people know what they can do to reduce the spread of a disease such as Covid-19. Include things such as hand washing, catching your sneezes and avoiding contact with others. Remember to use imperative verbs and see if you can organise your ideas into numbered points.

2 Imagine you live in Italy and have been told not to go to school. Write a letter to an imaginary pen-pal in the UK, telling them what it's like to have to stay home and how you feel about the whole situation.

Investigate

We are lucky to be living in an age where science helps us to understand so much about what causes diseases, how they are spread and what we can do to protect ourselves from them. This wasn't always the case. Investigate what people used to believe caused disease and describe some of their more unusual suggestions for cures.

