

February 12, 2020

Superintendents and School Principals,

We are writing to give you updated information on the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), a new virus causing respiratory illness.

The highest number of infections continues to be reported from Hubei Province, China. There have been a small number of cases of 2019-nCoV in B.C. which are being closely managed. The risk to British Columbians remains low.

Our knowledge of this virus continues to grow and we are using new information to adjust our public health recommendations. We are now aware of early evidence that this virus can cause a range of mild to severe symptoms, and it is possible that people will not recognize symptoms that are mild. During this time, they can reduce the chance of spread by limiting contact with others.

Therefore, we now recommend that:

- Students or staff returning from **Hubei Province, China** consider staying home for 14 days after they leave Hubei. They should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever or cough. Parents should assist children as needed. Those who develop symptoms should stay home and call their health-care provider or 8-1-1 to discuss any need for testing and follow up.
- Students or staff, who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with 2019-nCoV consider staying home for 14 days after their last encounter. Individuals should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever and cough. Parents should assist children as needed. Those who develop symptoms should stay home and call their health-care provider or 8-1-1 to discuss any need for testing and follow up.
- Students or staff who have been in other parts of China (outside Hubei Province) should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever or cough for 14 days. Parents should assist children as needed. Those who develop symptoms should stay home and call their health-care provider or 8-1-1 to discuss any need for testing and follow up.

While these recommendations are important, they are voluntary. School administrators and staff are not expected to enforce or monitor them.

Please reassure families with students required to stay home that they do not need to worry about missing school and offer opportunities for distance learning or catch-up once the students are cleared to return.

The Ministry of Education continues to be in close contact with public health officials at all levels of government and ask the public not to make assumptions about the risk of students or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Advice on School Events, Outings and Field Trips

It is not necessary to cancel school events, outings or field trips to public locations. School trips to China are not recommended at this time. [Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice](#)

Reducing the Risk of Coronavirus, Colds and Flu

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- If a sink is not available, alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, using a wipe and then ABHR is effective.
- Do not touch your face/eyes/mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Stay home if you are sick and away from others so you don't pass it on.

A new toll-free phone number (1-833-784-4397) has been established to answer questions from Canadians about the COVID-19. Service is available from 4:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m PST.

Anyone who is concerned they may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms of, the COVID-19 should contact their primary care provider, local public health office, or call 8-1-1.

Further information about COVID-19 is available on the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) website](#). You may also contact your local Medical Health Officer at the email provided.

Please contact me at the e-mail address provided below if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Silvina Mema', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Silvina Mema, MD MSc FRCPC
Medical Health Officer

SM/lis