

February 7, 2020

Dear Principals and Superintendents,

Re: Update on novel coronavirus

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 continue to be reported from Hubei Province, China. There have been a small number of cases of 2019-nCoV in B.C. which are being very 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, people can reduce the chance of spread by limiting contact with others.

**Public Health advice for students and staff**

- Students or staff who are now returning from **Hubei Province, China** should consider staying home for 14 days after leaving Hubei. They should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever or cough. Parents should assist children as needed.
- Students or staff who have returned from Hubei Province in the last two weeks and have been already in the school system do not need to stay home from school but should continue to monitor their symptoms for 14 days following their return.
- Students or staff, who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with 2019-nCoV should consider staying home for 14 days after their last encounter. Individuals should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever and cough.
- Students or staff who have been in other parts of China (outside Hubei Province) do not need to stay home from school but should monitor themselves daily for symptoms like fever or cough for 14 days.

**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.**

It is not necessary to cancel school events, outings or field trips to public locations. However, school trips to China are not recommended at this time. For more advice regarding travel, please consult this notice: [Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice](#)

**While these recommendations are important, they are voluntary. School administrators, staff and parent groups 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 and school community not to make assumptions about the risk of students or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Medical Health Officers are your school medical officers. Their role is to undertake communicable disease risk assessments and provide guidance on risk management. If you have concerns, including regarding an individual case, please contact your Medical Health Officer for assistance.

Yours Sincerely,



Mark Lysyshyn MD MPH FRCPC  
Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer  
Vancouver Coastal Health