

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Information for Schools, Colleges and Universities January 31, 2020

Many school administrators, teachers, staff, students and parents within New Hampshire are concerned about how the current outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in China will impact their communities and are seeking ways to stay healthy. The New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) is working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support our communities and medical providers by developing guidance and education materials.

What is the difference between seasonal coronaviruses and the 2019 novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses but there are different types of coronavirus within that family. Some frequently cause the common cold, but the 2019-nCoV that has recently emerged in Wuhan City, China is a new type of coronavirus that we believe moved from animals into humans and is infecting people for the first time.

What are common symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Most people initially identified with 2019-nCoV infection have developed symptoms of a lower respiratory tract illness, including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Because this is a new virus, we are still learning about all the symptoms people may develop when infected.

How is 2019-nCoV spread?

This virus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets (such as occur when an infected person coughs). We know that person-to-person spread is occurring in China and has also been confirmed in the United States and other countries. Risk for transmission is highest with close contact (e.g., family members, healthcare settings).

How is 2019-nCoV infection prevented or treated?

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent infection with this virus, and there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended once infected. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

How should schools that provide health care services (i.e., those with health centers) prepare for the potential of coronavirus in their community?

- Continue to monitor up to date information from health officials.
- Students who visit health services should be instructed to wear a face mask when they present with fever or respiratory symptoms.
- Registration staff and healthcare personnel should ask students with fever or respiratory symptoms whether they traveled to China in the 14 days prior to the onset of their symptoms.
- Clinicians should wear the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) to guard against potential exposure if they are seeing a patient with fever or respiratory symptoms who also travelled to China in the 14 days before to symptom onset: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hcp-personnel-checklist.html>
- Make sure your healthcare providers are fit tested for N95 mask use.
- Report any suspect patients to the public health professional on-call at NH DPHS by calling 603-271-4496 during business hours and 603-271-5300 after hours; we are available 24/7.
- Develop a plan for outbreak response and share with stakeholders.

- Create an emergency communication plan and maintain up to date contact information for everyone in your communication chain.
- Establish a leadership team, identify essential staff functions, and assign tasks and responsibilities.
- Have supplies on hand for staff and students, including masks, soap, tissues, hand sanitizers, trash baskets, etc.
- Plan workshops and trainings to educate students and staff on prevention measures (see below).

What preventive measures should be taken to help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses?

Staff and children should all be asked to follow these steps to prevent the spread of respiratory infections:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home from class and work until the sick individual has been fever free for at least 24 hours off any fever reducing medication, and they are feeling better.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Encourage/recommend the annual influenza vaccine.

What precautions should be taken for students or faculty who traveled to China?

People should avoid all travel to China at this time.

If a person travelled to China in the last 14 days and develops a fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) they should:

- Seek medical care. Before going to a doctor’s office or emergency room, the individual should call ahead and tell the provider or office about recent travel and symptoms.
- Avoid public places, including staying home from school or work and avoiding public transportation.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

People who have returned from China but are not sick may continue to attend class and work. They should be counseled that if symptoms develop (e.g. fever, cough, or difficulty breathing), they should remove themselves from contact with others and report their illness immediately.

School cleaning procedures

Special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning, including closing schools to clean every surface in the building are not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Schools should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys.

Where can I go for the most up-to-date information about the 2019-nCoV outbreak?

Outbreaks involving 2019-nCoV evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updated information:

- U.S. CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/summary.html>
- NH DPHS website: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>