

Background

China is experiencing an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This virus emerged in Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The virus is spreading from person-to-person, and cases are confirmed in the United States and a number of other countries.

Currently, the immediate risk to the general public in Montana and the United States is considered to be low. There is no evidence of COVID-19 in Montana at this time.

COVID-19 cases in Montana	0
Patient Under Investigation (PUI) - Evaluation Pending	0
- PUI who tested negative	1
- PUI who tested positive	0
- PUI with pending tests	0

*This information is current. The situation is rapidly evolving and updates will be posted at the close of business, Monday through Friday.
 Patients under investigation (PUI) are those who have symptoms of concern AND have travel to an area of concern OR are a close contact to a known case in the past 14 days.
 UPDATED: 2/19/2020*

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that usually cause mild respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that was not identified in humans before December 2019.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. It takes 2 to 14 days after a person gets the virus in their body to become ill. Novel coronavirus is new, and we are learning more each day about symptoms it causes how long it takes for people to become sick.

How does the virus spread?

Most often, it is spread from person-to-person via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how flu and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It's currently unclear if a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Often, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

Who should seek medical evaluation for COVID-19?

Students, staff, and volunteers who are:

- Ill with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have traveled from China in the last 14 days.
- Ill with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have been identified by Public Health as a recent close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case or had recent close contact with someone who is

What can I do to prevent COVID-19 infections in my school?

Schools do not need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of viruses in schools. You can help students and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by encouraging them to take simple steps which will also prevent COVID-19. These include:

- Staying home when they are sick.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after they blow their nose. Help young children do the same. If hands are visibly dirty, use soap and water to clean hands.
- If soap and water are not readily available, using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Advising persons to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Following the school's routine cleaning and disinfection program to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Covering coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and clean hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Urging students and staff to get a flu shot – it's not too late to be protected against influenza.
- Providing adequate supplies for good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures

Special processes beyond routine cleaning are not necessary nor recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Schools should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered product with a disinfectant claim for human coronaviruses. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as bathrooms, water coolers, desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys.

Where can I turn for more information?

- MT specific information: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>
- [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak 2020, DOH](#)
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China, CDC](#)
- [Guidance for Travelers, CDC](#)
- [Classroom Cleaning - Tips for Teachers](#)
- [Handwashing to Prevent Illness at School](#)