

March 02, 2020

Update on COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

To: Directors of Education and Principals

Update on COVID-19 (2019-Novel Coronavirus)

On January 30, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global public health emergency. The majority of COVID-19 cases are in mainland China; however, the virus has now been detected in a number of countries around the world.

- Please see the [Government of Canada Travel Advisory](#) site for the most up to date travel information as well as the John Hopkins dashboard on COVID -19 spread at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opstdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.
- For travellers during March Break, check the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Students and staff will need to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness, fever, cough, difficulty breathing before starting travel and upon returning home. If students or staff or family members have any symptoms, they are instructed to contact public health, telehealth, or primary care in advance for assessment.
- **New: COVID-19 PHAC guidance for schools and daycares** <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

Preventing the Spread of Illness

As cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to spread internationally, it is becoming more likely that we will see additional cases of the virus in Ontario, and within our local communities. KFL&A Public Health has been collaborating with partners at all levels of government, our acute care and community Health Care Providers and our school communities to prepare for local cases of COVID-19.

At this critical time, I am strongly recommending our school communities take the following steps to help prevent the spread of infection:

- Increase environmental cleaning (using a low-level disinfectant), with particular attention to high-touch surfaces such as desks, keyboards, door knobs, light switches, and phones.
- Provide additional education to school population regarding infection control strategies such as importance of hand hygiene and proper respiratory etiquette.
- Review internal policies on hand sanitizer use and consider providing an adequate supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer in all classrooms.

We are also requesting that teachers advise students and families of the following infection control strategies:

- Wash your hands frequently using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cough and sneeze into the bend of your arm, not into your hand
- If you use a tissue, throw it away immediately and wash your hands
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes with your hands

- Get plenty of rest, eat healthy and stay physically active to keep your immune system strong
- Stay home when you are sick and avoid contact with other people until you are better
- If you suspect you are sick, avoid visiting people in long term care, or individuals with health concerns
- If you are seeking medical care and are experiencing respiratory symptoms, always put on a mask when you arrive to help protect others

On February 26th, the advice for travellers returning to Canada was also expanded to include travel from South Korea, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Iran to self-monitor for symptoms and to contact public health or their health care providers if symptomatic within 14 days of travel.

Additional recommendations and resources for our school communities are available at kflaph.ca or by calling Supporting Healthy Schools at 613-549-1232, extension 1102.

As this situation is rapidly evolving, KFL&A Public Health is committed to providing our community with up-to-date information as it becomes available. Current information on COVID-19 is available through Ontario.ca/coronavirus, at publichealthontario.ca, and kflaph.ca.

For more information contact KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232.